THE BIBLE OF BOXING

SPECIAL ISSUE

The RING

SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

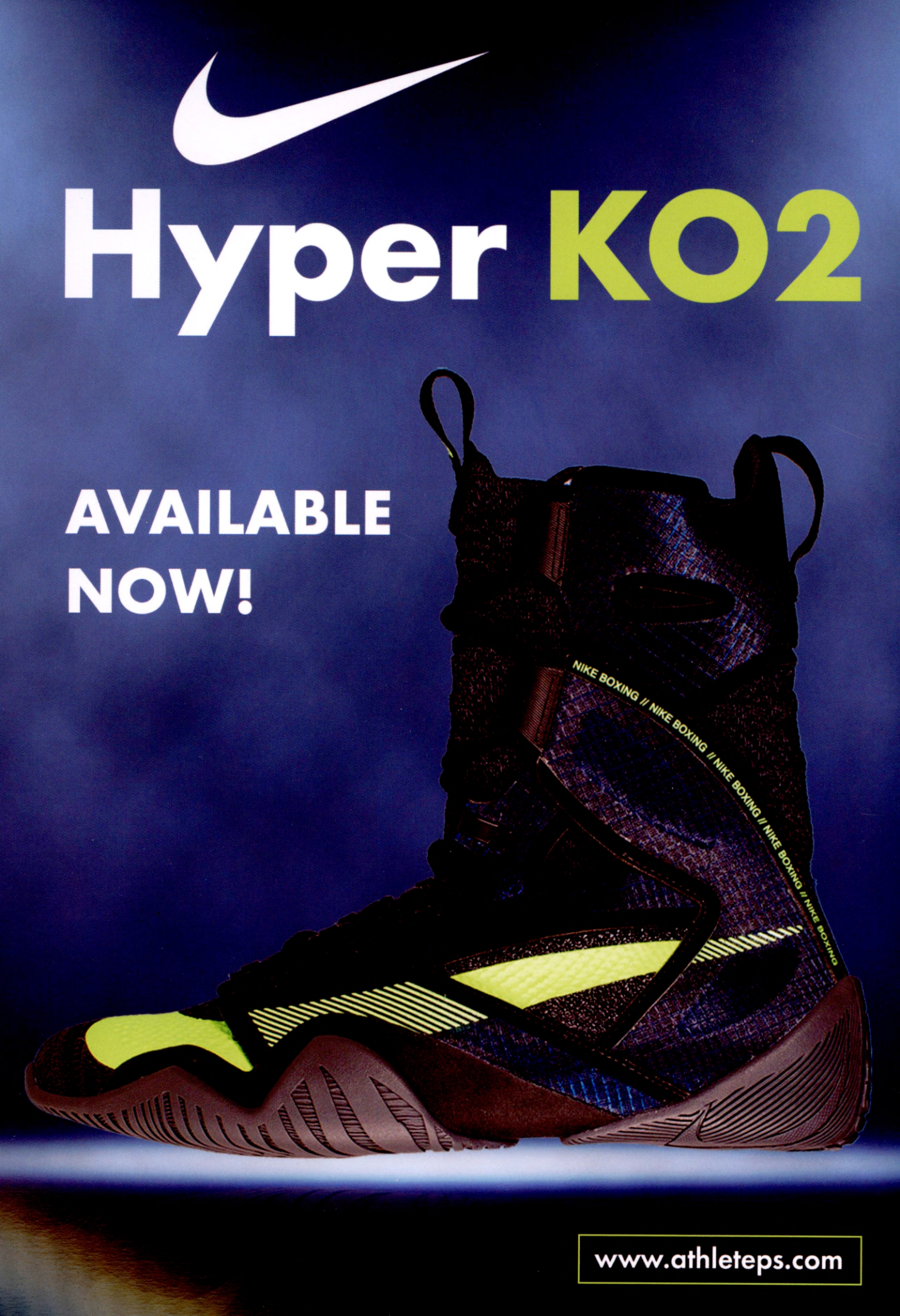
THE GREATEST FIGHTER EVER

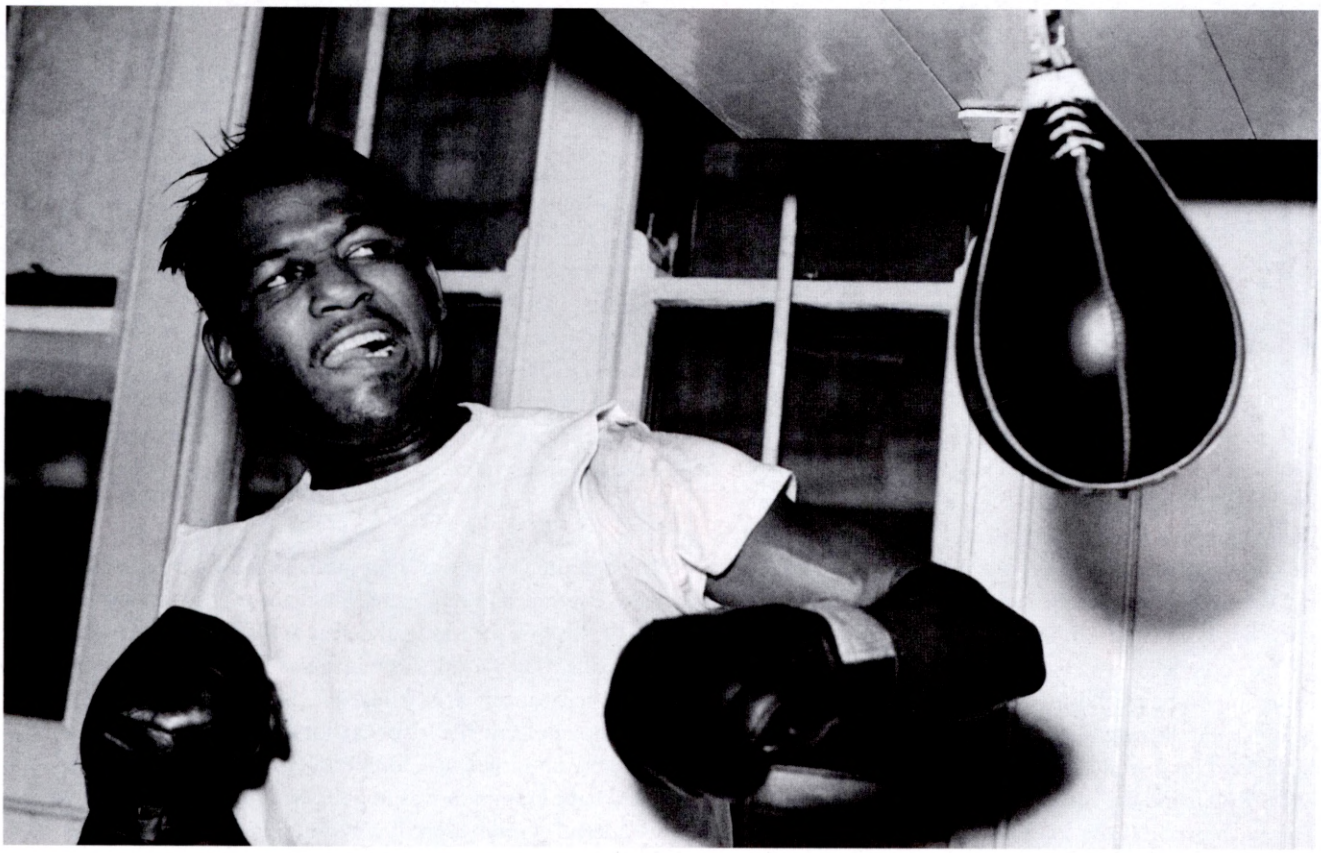
JULY 2021
$8.95
07
$8.95
0 72246 00396 1

FOREWORD BY

SUGAR RAY LEONARD

The RING


Hyper KO2
AVAILABLE NOW!
NIKE BOXING // NIKE BOXING // NIKE BOXING // NIKE BOXING // NIKE BOXING
www.athleteps.com



SUGAR RAY ROBINSON SPECIAL

14 DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH
ROBINSON'S JOURNEY BEGAN WITH A MOVE FROM DETROIT TO HARLEM
By Thomas Hauser

★ ★ ★

CLASSIC FIGHT REPORTS FROM THE RING

18 SUGAR RAY DEFEATS SAMMY ANGOTT
By Nat Fleischer

20 SUGAR VS. THE BRONX BULL – FIGHTS II AND III
By The Ring

22 SUGAR RAY'S MASTERY STANDS OUT: ROBINSON VS. GAVILAN II
By Nat Fleischer

28 RAY ROBINSON STIRS UP ACTION IN THREE CLASSES: LAMOTTA VI
By Nat Fleischer

32 MAXIM OUTCLASSED, BUT HEAT FELLS ROBINSON
By Nat Fleischer

★ ★ ★

36 ROBINSON VS. THE MOB
STANDING UP TO THE MAFIA MAY HAVE DELAYED SUGAR'S TITLE SHOT
By Don Stradley

42 TRY, TRY, TRY, TRY AGAIN
ROBINSON FLIRTED WITH RETIREMENT BUT COULDN'T GIVE UP HIS FIRST LOVE
By Lee Groves

50 THROUGH THE LENS
A CANDID LOOK AT THE QUIETER SIDE OF SUGAR RAY ROBINSON'S CAREER
By Doug Fischer

56 FACING GREATNESS
FOUR FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF TRADING PUNCHES WITH SUGAR
By Tris Dixon

60 WITNESS TO A LEGEND
EVEN PAST HIS PRIME, ROBINSON WAS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD
By Michael Rosenthal

66 SUGAR IN A TUX
ROBINSON FOUND SHOWBIZ SUCCESS MORE ELUSIVE THAN RING GLORY
By Herb Boyd

72 A STAR IN ANY ERA
SUGAR WOULD'VE SHINED IN THE DIGITAL WORLD
By Gareth A Davies

DEPARTMENTS

2 COME OUT WRITING

5 RINGSIDE By Sugar Ray Leonard

8 RING RATINGS PACKAGE

78 FROM THE ARCHIVES

80 COMING UP

Robinson's workouts were serious business but were seen as entertainment in themselves.

COVER PHOTO BY BETTMANN

BRUSH WITH A LEGEND

I had accompanied Rubin Carter to Madison Square Garden for his fight with Holly Mims on a cold day in December 1962. I was 16 years old and we had been together since I was 15.

Rubin knew Ray Robinson and had introduced me to him once before telling me he had the most respect for two men at that time – one was Miles Davis, who knew Rubin well, and the other was Ray Robinson.

Robinson had come into the dressing room to wish Rubin luck but told him he could not stay for the whole fight. He had fought Mims in 1951, right after he won the middleweight title from Jake LaMotta. Mims went the full 10 rounds with Ray, and after the fight, Robinson said to him, "Where have they been keeping you?" Ray had scored the first knockdown of Mims' career in that fight but got cut in a hard contest.

Robinson said his hellos to everyone and told Rubin, "Stay on this guy, but be careful. He is a sneaky puncher." Ray hung around for a while with a buddy of his, and then it was time for Rubin and the cornermen to leave.

They all left, and Robinson turned to me and said, "Hang on, ole buddy." I did not know what he meant, so I waited. They all left except him and me.

He said to me, "I want you to look out for Rubin. He likes you. He doesn't listen to anyone, not even me. He has got to spend more time training, and then with his family. Keep an eye on him for me, champ. He's too damn angry all the time. I remember you had him laughing up in camp; keep doing that for him, OK?

I said, "OK, Mr. Robinson." He said, "Call me Sugar," and I smiled at him. I walked out to my seat and he went somewhere else in the arena.

Talking to him was like being in the presence of one of the coolest guys imaginable. He just radiated smiles, charm and elegance and moved and walked like a dancer, but a dancer made of steel.

I never told Rubin what Ray Robinson said, but I did my best to do what I promised.

I saw Robinson again when he fought Joey Archer in 1965. We only had a chance to say hello again before the fight. He said hello to me and asked, "You still keeping an eye on Rubin for me?" I said, "Yeah, Ray, but it's hard to do." And he nodded knowingly and said, "Yeah I know." That was it.

Ron Lipton

Mr. Lipton is a veteran world-class referee, record-setting amateur boxer (for scoring back-to-back 16-second knockouts) and historian who was inducted into the New York and New Jersey boxing halls of fame. He's also a frequent contributor to The Ring.

PRAISE FOR THE JACKAL

I wanted to wish Carl Frampton all the very best in his retirement from our great sport of boxing. Carl has given us so many happy memories from the early days as an amateur in the Ulster finals to so many great nights at Odyssey Arena, the Quigg fight at Manchester, the world title win against Martinez at the Titanic Quarter. I feel truly blessed that I was able to take my two lads to their first fight on that fantastic wet night at Windsor Park in Belfast, Northern Ireland. We have been lucky to meet Carl a few times; he is such a gentleman and fantastic role model for all – he has inspired the next generation of boxing fans. Thanks for the memories, Carl Frampton, "Future Hall of Famer," the best boxer to come from the shores of Ireland. All the very best in what you decide to do next, Champ!

Liam Haughton

The first time I saw Carl Frampton live … I remember it like it was yesterday. His opponent that night was a man looking to avenge his first professional defeat at the fists of the Irishman they called The Jackal. His name was Leo Santa Cruz. That night, vengeance was his indeed … but he had to earn it.

Although I saw the Irish warrior on the losing end, I also saw how he earned his moniker of The Jackal. In that fight and every fight Frampton was in after, win or lose, I always saw that wonderful combination of wily cunning and gritty ferocity so often seen in those wild dogs of Africa and southern Asia.

Whenever he laced up a pair of gloves for a fight, Carl Frampton unified his people. He hails from Belfast, a region of Ireland with a sometimes dark and troubled history. Yet whenever Frampton stepped into the squared circle, his countrymen embraced him as a hero.

As far as this writer is concerned, Carl Frampton's name can be included in the pantheon of the greatest Irish pugilists. Let others determine his place; I will content myself with wonderful memories and say "Adieu, Jackal! Adieu!"

In the squared circle, a fan will see some of the worst man has to offer his fellow man. But every now and then, like the silver lining behind a dark cloud, a fan will also see the man's very best.

I wish Carl Frampton a happy and fruitful retirement. As I write these words, I catch myself thinking back on that night I saw him live. I remember the man who unified Irish and Brits and Catholics and Protestants into cheering him on as he made his way to the ring to fight for them.

Gregory Knipp

SORRY, KATIE

You have in the women's ratings that Katie Taylor is from the U.K. For your information, Katie is from Bray, County Wicklow, Republic of Ireland, not the U.K.

Kevin Fox

Editor's note: We're embarrassed to see that this mistake went unnoticed for so long, but thank you for pointing it out, Kevin.

WRITE TO THE RING! Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 90254, Brooklyn, NY 11209 comeoutwriting@gmail.com ★ Emailed letters will include a writer's email address unless a city and state of origin are provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

TITLE BOXING

GEAR FOR EVERY GENERATION OF CHAMPIONS

@titleboxing /titleboxing /titleboxing @titleboxing

TITLEBOXING.COM

SCORECARDS

Boxing Aficionado™

MAIN EVENT

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

CO-MAIN EVENT

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

PRELIMS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
RED CORNER													
BLUE CORNER													

HOME OF THE WEIGHT CLASS SNAPBACKS

BOXINGAFICIONADO.COM

ALSO AVAILABLE AT
RINGMAGSHOP.COM

EST. 1922 The RING 100 YEARS

VOLUME 100, NO. 7 / **JULY** 2021

FOUNDER
Nathaniel Fleischer (1888-1972)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Douglass Fischer

SENIOR EDITOR
Brian Harty

MANAGING EDITOR
Tom Gray

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Lamar Clark

CONTROLLER
Deborah L. Harrison

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
Advertising@sepublications.com
215-643-3069

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
BACK ISSUES INQUIRIES
DIGITAL ORDERS INQUIRIES
Sports and Entertainment Publications
P.O. Box 433122
Palm Coast, Fl 32164-3122
800-846-6438
thering@emailcustomerservice.com

SEND EDITORIAL COMMENTS TO:
comeoutwriting@gmail.com
or P.O. Box 90254
Brooklyn, NY 11209

THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 100, NO. 7 (JULY 2021), is published 12 times per year by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 433122, Palm Coast, FL 32164-3122. Single copy price $8.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£5.99 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. and possession $39.99 for 12 issues including Canada. Mexico add $5. All remaining countries add $10 for 12 issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2021 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@sepublications.com. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group LLC, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, NJ 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In U.S.A.

ANADOLU AGENCY

RINGSIDE BY SUGAR RAY LEONARD

SUGAR, SUGAR!

Leonard between his boxing idols, Sugar Ray Robinson and Muhammad Ali.

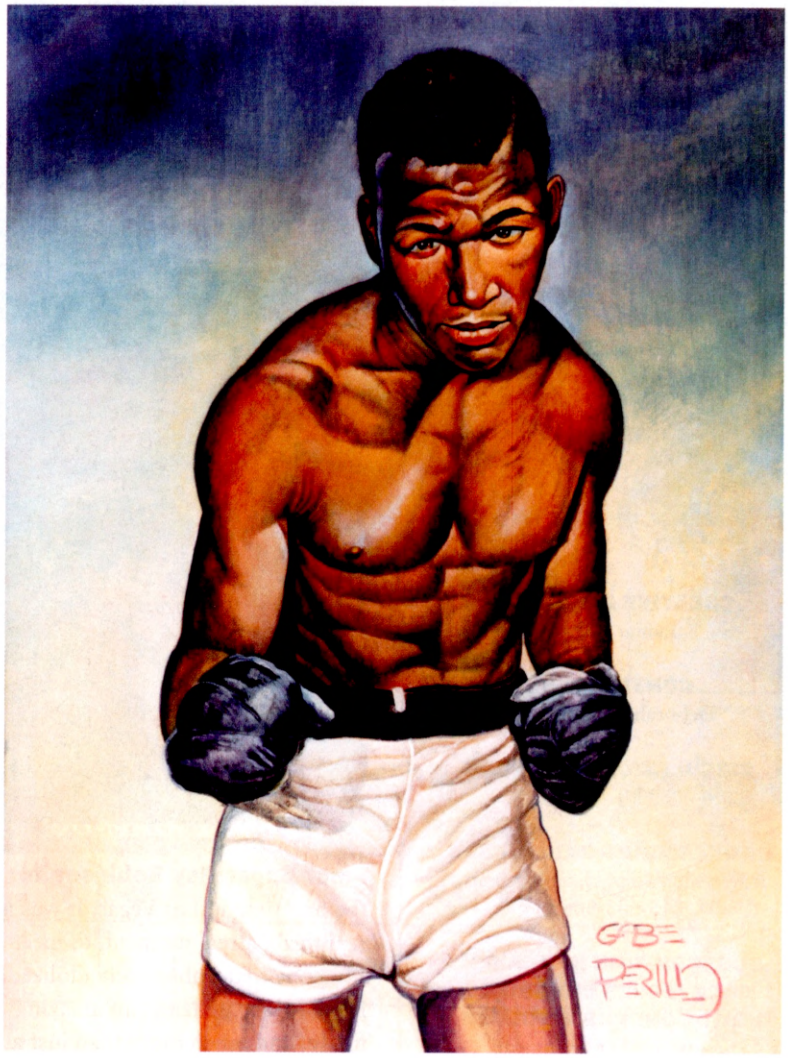
I met Sugar Ray Robinson for the first time in Las Vegas. It was a real thrill, a real moment, to meet someone that I absolutely idolized. He was just amazing, an amazing figure, and much more than just a boxer. He was like Muhammad Ali – larger than life.

I'd watch tapes of his fights and documentaries back then, and Sugar Ray always had such a presence. There are certain athletes and champions that have this presence where you just know that you're looking at greatness. I watched all the fights I could, and it wasn't just the fact that he won, it was how he won. It was a thing of beauty.

Was there pressure to carry the name Sugar Ray? I was so optimistic and confident, so eager to even come close to what he'd accomplished that it was more an inspiration for me. I can't recall anyone being negative about me carrying the name, but I'm sure, at some point, there would have been a bit of negativity. However, when I met Sugar Ray in Vegas, 10 or 15 fights into my career, I said, "Mr. Robinson, I use your name and I just want to make sure it's OK?" He said, "Absolutely; I've been watching you, I'd be proud. Thank you!" Now, I remember that moment, and looking back, it just seemed like the professional thing to do. For him to welcome that, to say it was OK, was like a passing of the torch. I felt close to him, and he would often say to me: "Always be prepared! Always be ready to fight, Ray!"

Outside of the ring, he dressed so beautifully, like he was on stage, on a podium. That helped create the presence that he had – look at me, I'm a superstar, I'm somebody. Then he had all those businesses in Harlem: bars, dry cleaners, clothing stores; he had a little bit of everything. All of that success inspired me, motivated me, made me work harder to be the best I could be.

The whole concept of being an entertainer, I got from him. I would say, "I'm not just a fighter, I'm an entertainer!" When Sugar Ray fought, the way he threw his punches generated entertainment and excitement. Whether it was the bolo punch, the body shots, he threw so many punches with such



variety and authority – he was years ahead of his time. He also cared about the way he looked and was a champion of beauty. He was so fast, so good, that he didn't get bruised up too much.

I had 40 professional fights and Sugar Ray had over 200. Even though I've known about the amount of fights he had for such a long time, that still amazes me. He was meant to be a great fighter, he was meant to be a great champion. He was what a champion is all about.

And when Sugar Ray would lose a fight, he always came into the rematch with so much more intensity. Nobody likes to lose, but the loss that I had to Roberto Duran made me a student. It was Duran who taught me that the mental aspect, the psychological aspect of boxing, is every bit as important as the physical. I could look to Sugar Ray Robinson as an inspiration because coming back from defeat is what made him a true champion.

Was Sugar Ray the greatest fighter ever? Absolutely, you just can't say no to that. He was the complete package. Some people will say it's subjective. Muhammad Ali, for a lot of people, will always be "The Greatest" because of what he accomplished. People always talk about who's the greatest, and they'll still be talking about that hundreds of years from now. All I can say is I'm happy to have known both of them.

For those fight fans who haven't seen Sugar Ray Robinson in action, I would encourage them to do so. They'll see a man, a fighter, a champion who approaches the opposition with a beautiful style, a powerful style and a winner's mentality. He had everything one requires to achieve greatness. He was the ideal champion. No one word could ever truly describe him, but if I had to use one, it would be "special." RING

DI NARDO
TORINO

TAILOR
CRAFTSMAN
CREATOR OF
THE GREATEST
BOXING GLOVES
IN THE WORLD.
100%
HANDMADE IN
ITALY

NOW AVAILABLE
WORLDWIDE

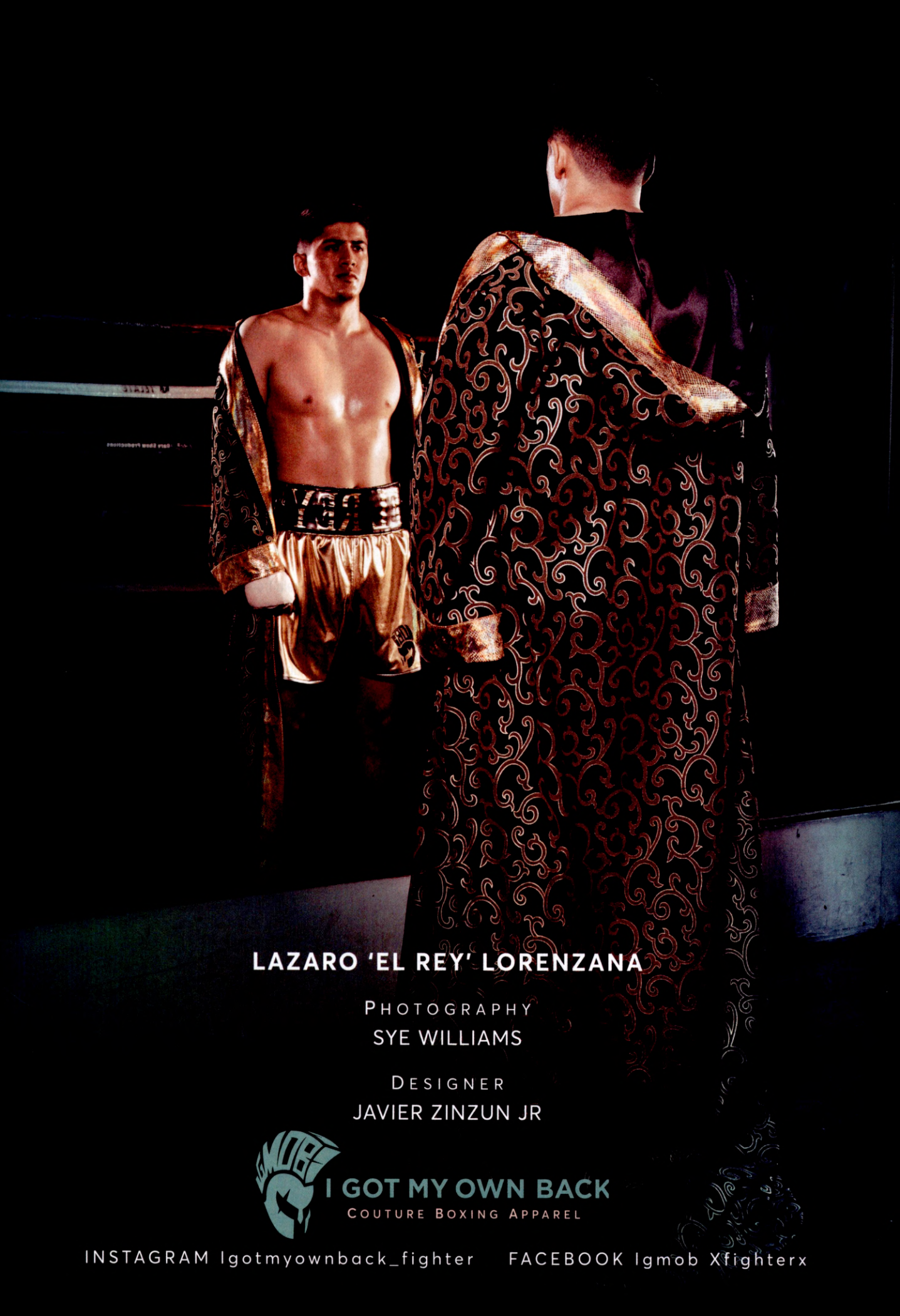
INFO
PHONE: +393930012778

FILIPPO.DINARDO@PROTONMAIL.COM

NSAC CERTIFICATE
NYSAC CERTIFICATE
WBC CERTIFICATE
BBBofC CERTIFICATE

WWW.FILIPPODINARDO.COM -
BOXING EQUIPMENT

WWW.DINARDOBOXING.COM -
SPORTSWEAR



LAZARO 'EL REY' LORENZANA

PHOTOGRAPHY
SYE WILLIAMS

DESIGNER
JAVIER ZINZUN JR

I GOT MY OWN BACK
COUTURE BOXING APPAREL

INSTAGRAM Igotmyownback_fighter FACEBOOK Igmob Xfighterx

RATINGS

SUMMARY ★ ANALYSIS

The Ring Ratings through fights of April 17, 2021

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS BY BRIAN HARTY

CRUISERWEIGHT: Former kickboxing champion Aleksei Papin stayed put at No. 9 with an effortless first-round stoppage of Vaclav Pejsar (unrated).

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: Russian veteran Maxim Vlasov (unrated last month), though he really seems to hate the idea of defense, was doing great against Joe Smith Jr. (No. 4 last month), whose posture and left eye were disintegrating after several rounds of high-volume combat. The heavy-handed Long Islander hung tough, however, eking out a fortunate majority decision to win a vacant title. Smith gained a notch and Vlasov was brought in at No. 10 to reward his effort, which knocked Lyndon Arthur off the list.

Joe Smith Jr. (left) narrowly beat Maxim Vlasov for a vacant title.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: Undefeated Ecuadorian Carlos Gongora replaced Edgar Berlanga at No. 10 after a dominant win over Christopher Pearson (unrated), who took a knee and was counted out in the eighth round.

MIDDLEWEIGHT: Demetrius Andrade delivered a firm "I'm still here" in defending his WBO title against Liam Williams, dropping the Welshman with a one-two in Round 2 and winning a wide decision on the cards. It was a nice victory but not enough to jump over Jermall Charlo, so Andrade remained at No. 3 while Williams dropped from No. 8 to No. 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: Tim Tszyu again showed that the son is deserving of his own place in the sun, honoring the family name with a fifth-round stoppage of the declining but still dangerous Dennis Hogan (unrated). The spawn of Kostya rose from No. 9 to No. 8.

A couple weeks later, No. 6-rated Tony Harrison was not so impressive in a draw against unrated Bryant Perrella, so the Michigander was demoted to No. 7.

WELTERWEIGHT: Everyone already expects big things from Jaron Ennis, and he finally cracked the ratings at No. 8 with a performance that impressed one panelist enough to imagine young "Boots" sitting on the pound-for-pound throne someday. Using his fluid mix of talent and power, the Philadelphian was too much for Sergey Lipinets, who was finished with a short left after six rounds of being assaulted from all angles. The Kazakhstan-born Russian dropped off the list from No. 9 as a result.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: Even though it was the most legit boxing match on a card headlined by Jake Paul vs. Ben Askren, No. 2-rated Regis Prograis' victory over Ivan Redkach (unrated) was not without its own weirdness. Originally ruled a technical decision when Redkach left the arena on a stretcher after an apparent low blow from Prograis, the result was later changed to a TKO after somebody dug into the Georgia rule book and discovered that Redkach's incapacitated state actually worked against him: Accident or not, if you can't continue, you're a loser in the Peach State.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: Carl Frampton was unable to cope with the effective jabs and complimentary power of Jamel Herring, who sealed the deal with a perfect left uppercut in Round 6 and was awarded the TKO soon afterward. It was a validating win for the 35-year-old titleholder, and the Ratings Panel unanimously decided to raise him from No. 5 to No. 3 above Joseph Diaz Jr. Herring now hopes to get a crack at No. 2-rated Oscar Valdez and even solicited some matchmaking help from our own Editor-in-Chief in his post-fight comments. As for The Jackal, who was understandably disappointed as he announced his retirement, one only needs to look at the letters in this month's "Come Out Writing" section to appreciate the respect that will forever be heaped on the 2016 Fighter of the Year from Northern Ireland.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT: Double beltholder Murodjon Akhmadaliev (No. 1) gave his hometown fans in Uzbekistan a good show, aggressively jabbing and hooking his way through a dominant performance against former titleholder Ryosuke Iwasa, who nonetheless gave a hearty warrior's laugh when the referee stepped in to call a fifth-round stoppage. Iwasa dropped from No. 4 to No. 10 after the loss.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT: He might be overshadowed by the little giants in his division, but Jerwin Ancajas (No. 4) reasserted his credentials with the ninth defense of his IBF title, grinding out a unanimous decision over Jonathan Rodriguez (unrated) in Connecticut. It was Ancajas' first time in the ring since December 2019, so there was no shame in showing a little rust.

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

P4P

1. **CANELO ALVAREZ**
   Mexico • 55-1-2 (37 KOs)
2. **NAOYA INOUE**
   Japan • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
3. **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
   U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
4. **ALEKSANDR USYK**
   Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
5. **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
   U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
6. **TEOFIMO LOPEZ**
   U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
7. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
   Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
8. **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
   Ukraine • 14-2-0 (10 KOs)
9. **JOSH TAYLOR**
   U.K. • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)
10. **KAZUTO IOKA**
    Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)

After several years on pundits' "pound-for-pound fringe" lists, Juan Francisco Estrada is working his way up the mythical rankings and is now undeniably The Man at junior bantamweight.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

- **C** **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
  U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)
- **1** **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
  U.K. • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **DEONTAY WILDER**
  U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)
- **3** **DILLIAN WHYTE**
  U.K. • 28-2-0 (19 KOs)
- **4** **LUIS ORTIZ**
  Cuba • 32-2-0 (27 KOs)
- **5** **JOSEPH PARKER**
  New Zealand • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
  U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **7** **MICHAEL HUNTER**
  U.S. • 19-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **8** **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
  Russia • 36-3-1 (25 KOs)
- **9** **OSCAR RIVAS**
  Colombia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **10** **ALEKSANDR USYK**
  Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

- **C** **MAIRIS BRIEDIS** RING, IBF
  Latvia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **1** **YUNIEL DORTICOS**
  Cuba • 24-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
  Congo • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **3** **LAWRENCE OKOLIE** WBO
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **THABISO MCHUNU**
  S. Africa • 23-5-0 (13 KOs)
- **5** **KEVIN LERENA**
  S. Africa • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW TABITI**
  U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **7** **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
  France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
  Poland • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **9** **ALEKSEI PAPIN**
  Russia • 13-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **MICHAL CIESLAK**
  Poland • 20-1-0 (14 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
  Russia • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **2** **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
  Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **3** **JOE SMITH JR.**
  U.S. • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **4** **SERGEY KOVALEV**
  Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)
- **5** **JEAN PASCAL**
  Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)
- **6** **BADOU JACK**
  Sweden • 23-3-3 (13 KOs)
- **7** **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
  Colombia • 25-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **8** **MARCUS BROWNE**
  U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **UMAR SALAMOV**
  Russia • 25-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **10** **MAXIM VLASOV**
  Russia • 45-4-0 (26 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA, WBC
  Mexico • 55-1-2 (37 KOs)
- **1** **DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
  U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **CALEB PLANT** IBF
  U.S. • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **CALLUM SMITH**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **4** **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
  U.K. • 30-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
  U.S. • 33-2-2 (24 KOs)
- **6** **JOHN RYDER**
  U.K. • 29-5-0 (16 KOs)
- **7** **DAVID LEMIEUX**
  Canada • 42-4-0 (35 KOs)
- **8** **DANIEL JACOBS**
  U.S. • 37-3-0 (30 KOs)
- **9** **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
  Russia • 23-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS GONGORA**
  Ecuador • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of April 17, 2021

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF
  Kazakhstan • 41-1-1 (36 KOs)
- **2** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 31-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO
  U.S. • 30-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
  Ukraine • 13-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA** WBA
  Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
  U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **7** **ROB BRANT**
  U.S. • 26-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **JAIME MUNGUIA**
  Mexico • 36-0-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY**
  Kazakhstan • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS**
  U.K. • 23-3-1 (18 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **JERMELL CHARLO** RING, WBC, IBF, WBA
  U.S. • 34-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **1** **JARRETT HURD**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **2** **ERISLANDY LARA**
  Cuba • 27-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **3** **BRIAN CASTANO** WBO
  Argentina • 17-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **4** **JEISON ROSARIO**
  Dom. Rep. • 20-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **5** **JULIAN WILLIAMS**
  U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **6** **ERICKSON LUBIN**
  U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON**
  U.S. • 28-3-1 (21 KOs)
- **8** **TIM TSZYU**
  Australia • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **MICHEL SORO**
  France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **10** **SEBASTIAN FUNDORA**
  U.S. • 16-0-1 (11 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
  U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO**
  Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN**
  U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER**
  U.S. • 31-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **YORDENIS UGAS** WBA
  Cuba • 26-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **7** **DANNY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **JARON ENNIS**
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (25 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**
  Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **VERGIL ORTIZ JR.**
  U.S. • 17-0-0 (17 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA
  U.K. • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (21 KOs)
- **3** **JOSE ZEPEDA**
  U.S. • 33-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL**
  Ukraine • 31-3-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **6** **IVAN BARANCHYK**
  Russia • 20-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **7** **MARIO BARRIOS**
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **8** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV**
  Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
  Uzbekistan • 19-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **ROBERT EASTER JR.**
  U.S. • 23-1-1 (14 KOs)

No. 9-rated cruiserweight Aleksei Papin continued to rebound from his only loss with an easy first-round stoppage of Vaclav Pejsar.

Jaron Ennis "booted" Sergey Lipinets out of the welterweight ratings – and got himself in – with an impressive sixth-round knockout.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** RING, WBA, WBO, IBF
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
  Ukraine • 14-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **RYAN GARCIA**
  U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **DEVIN HANEY** WBC
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **RICHARD COMMEY**
  Ghana • 30-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **5** **LUKE CAMPBELL**
  U.K. • 20-4-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **JAVIER FORTUNA**
  Dom. Rep. • 36-2-1 (25 KOs)
- **7** **JORGE LINARES**
  Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **8** **GEORGE KAMBOSOS JR.**
  Australia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **9** **MASAYOSHI NAKATANI**
  Japan • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **10** **ISAAC CRUZ**
  Mexico • 21-1-1 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GERVONTA DAVIS** WBA
  U.S. • 24-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **2** **OSCAR VALDEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 29-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO
  U.S. • 23-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **4** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF
  U.S. • 31-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **5** **MIGUEL BERCHELT**
  Mexico • 37-2-0 (33 KOs)
- **6** **TEVIN FARMER**
  U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **7** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
  Russia • 15-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **8** **SHAKUR STEVENSON**
  U.S. • 15-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **9** **CHRIS COLBERT**
  U.S. • 15-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **10** **ROGER GUTIERREZ**
  Venezuela • 25-3-1 (20 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **XU CAN**
  China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **3** **KID GALAHAD**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **4** **MAURICIO LARA**
  Mexico • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **5** **JOSH WARRINGTON**
  U.K. • 30-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **6** **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO
  Mexico • 32-1-0 (27 KOs)
- **7** **MARK MAGSAYO**
  Phil. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **8** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**
  Mongolia • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **JESSIE MAGDALENO**
  U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **10** **JOET GONZALEZ**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA
  Uzbekistan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **DANIEL ROMAN**
  U.S. • 28-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **3** **STEPHEN FULTON** WBO
  U.S. • 19-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **4** **BRANDON FIGUEROA**
  U.S. • 21-0-1 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ANGELO LEO**
  U.S. • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**
  Japan • 22-2-2 (15 KOs)
- **7** **RAEESE ALEEM**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
  Armenia • 19-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **RONNY RIOS**
  U.S. • 33-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **RYOSUKE IWASA**
  Japan • 27-4-0 (17 KOs)

GET 6 ISSUES FOR $24.99

3 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER (ENCLOSED & PAYABLE TO SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC) ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 20120

GET 12 ISSUES FOR $39.99

7 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

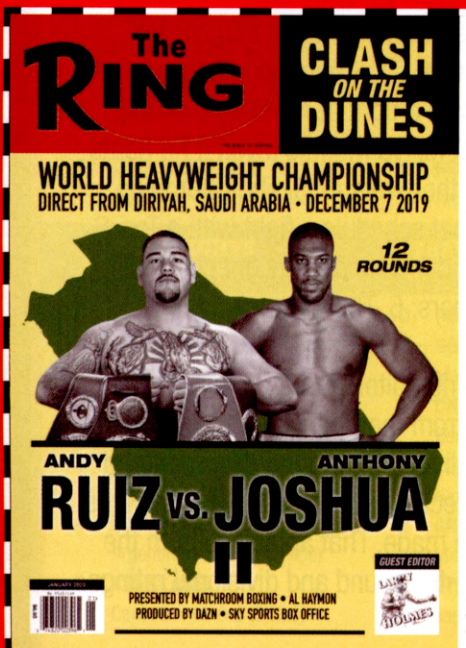
EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER (ENCLOSED & PAYABLE TO SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC) ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2020



GET 24 ISSUES FOR $64.99

16 ISSUES FREE

SPECIAL DISCOUNT
PROMO CODE: 6301NC

NAME

ADDRESS / APT

CITY / STATE / ZIP

EMAIL TELEPHONE

PAYMENT METHOD: ☐CHECK / MONEY ORDER (ENCLOSED & PAYABLE TO SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC) ☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD ☐AMEX

CARD # / EXP. DATE 3 OR 4 DIGIT SECURITY CODE SIGNATURE

MAIL TO: SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICATIONS LLC, P.O. BOX 433122, PALM COAST, FL 32164-3122
OR CALL: 1.800.846.6438 **OR EMAIL:** thering@emailcustomerservice.com

*FOR CANADA AND MEXICO: $29.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $49.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $79.99 FOR TWO YEARS. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES: $34.99 FOR 6 ISSUES; $59.99 FOR ONE YEAR; $99.99 FOR TWO YEARS. INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS ONLY IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. AIRMAIL SHIPPING ONLY OUTSIDE THE U.S. PLEASE ALLOW UP TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIRST MAGAZINE. OFFER EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2020

RATINGS

Through fights of April 17, 2021

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
Japan • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

1 **NONITO DONAIRE**
Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)

2 **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
Philippines • 30-4-0 (21 KOs)

4 **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
Puerto Rico • 19-2-0 (12 KOs)

5 **ZOLANI TETE**
S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)

6 **TAKUMA INOUE**
Japan • 14-1-0 (3 KOs)

7 **JASON MOLONEY**
Australia • 21-2-0 (18 KOs)

8 **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)

9 **MIKE PLANIA**
Philippines • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

10 **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL**
U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBA, WBC
Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)

1 **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 50-5-1 (43 KOs)

2 **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua • 50-3-0 (41 KOs)

3 **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)

4 **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
Phil. • 33-1-2 (22 KOs)

5 **KHALID YAFAI**
U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)

6 **JOSHUA FRANCO**
U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)

7 **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
Mexico • 34-4-1 (24 KOs)

8 **ANDREW MOLONEY**
Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)

9 **JEYVIER CINTRON**
Puerto Rico • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)

10 **CARLOS CUADRAS**
Mexico • 39-4-1 (27 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)

2 **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
Mexico • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

3 **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

4 **JUNTO NAKATANI** WBO
Japan • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)

5 **MASAYUKI KURODA**
Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)

6 **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
Nicaragua • 31-5-0 (21 KOs)

7 **JAY HARRIS**
U.K. • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)

8 **ANGEL ACOSTA**
Puerto Rico • 22-2-0 (21 KOs)

9 **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
Puerto Rico • 21-4-0 (16 KOs)

10 **JOSELITO VELAZQUEZ**
Mexico • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
Japan • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

1 **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)

2 **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
Nicaragua • 36-2-0 (31 KOs)

3 **HEKKIE BUDLER**
S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)

4 **CARLOS CANIZALES**
Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)

5 **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
Mexico • 18-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **TETSUYA HISADA**
Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)

7 **EDWARD HENO**
Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)

8 **SHO KIMURA**
Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)

9 **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
Argentina • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)

10 **JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
U.S. • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)

Demetrius Andrade knocked Liam Williams down a couple notches in the middleweight ratings.

Tony Harrison (right) slipped to No. 7 on the junior middleweight list after a draw with the unrated Bryant Perrella.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)

2 **PETCHMANEE CP FRESHMART** WBC
Thailand • 36-1-0 (23 KOs)

3 **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
Thailand • 54-1-0 (18 KOs)

4 **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)

5 **BYRON ROJAS**
Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)

6 **VIC SALUDAR**
Phil. • 21-4-0 (11 KOs)

7 **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)

8 **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)

9 **RENE MARK CUARTO** IBF
Phil. • 19-2-2 (11 KOs)

10 **PEDRO TADURAN**
Phil. • 14-3-1 (11 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

ANDRADE: ALEX MENENDEZ/GETTY IMAGES; HARRISON: JOHN MCCOY/GETTY IMAGES

WOMEN'S RATINGS

Through fights of April 17, 2021

POUND FOR POUND

1 **KATIE TAYLOR**
Ireland • 17-0-0 (6 KOs)

2 **CLARESSA SHIELDS**
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)

3 **AMANDA SERRANO**
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)

4 **JESSICA MCCASKILL**
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)

5 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 44-3-0 (18 KOs)

6 **YESICA BOPP**
Argentina • 36-1-0 (16 KOs)

7 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)

8 **DANIELA BERMUDEZ**
Argentina • 29-4-3 (10 KOs)

9 **MARCELA ACUNA**
Argentina • 49-7-2 (20 KOs)

10 **MIKAELA MAYER**
U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ELIN CEDERROOS** IBF, WBA
Sweden • 8-0-0 (4 KOs)
2 **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** WBC, WBO
U.S. • 7-1-0 (2 KOs)
3 **ALICIA NAPOLEON ESPINOSA**
U.S. • 12-2-0 (7 KOs)
4 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 20-0-1 (10 KOs)
5 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHT
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA HAMMER**
Germany • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
3 **TORI NELSON**
U.S. • 20-2-3 (4 KOs)
4 **TAYLA HARRIS**
Australia • 7-0-1 (3 KOs)
5 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 20-0-1 (10 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** WBC, WBO, IBF
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **MARIE EVE DICAIRE**
Canada • 17-1-0 (0 KOs)
2 **HANNA GABRIELS** WBA
Costa Rica • 21-2-1 (12 KOs)
3 **MIKAELA LAUREN**
Sweden • 32-6-0 (13 KOs)
4 **CHRIS NAMUS**
Uruguay • 25-6-0 (8 KOs)
5 **PATRICIA BERGHULT**
Sweden • 14-0-0 (3 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **JESSICA MCCASKILL** IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)
1 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)
2 **LAYLA MCCARTER**
U.S. • 44-13-5 (11 KOs)
3 **ORNELLA DOMINI**
Switzerland • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
4 **VICTORIA BUSTOS**
Argentina • 20-6-0 (0 KOs)
5 **LOLITA MUZEYA**
Zambia • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **CHRISTINA LINARDATOU** WBO
Greece • 13-2-0 (6 KOs)
2 **MARY MCGEE** IBF
U.S. • 27-3-0 (15 KOs)
3 **CHANTELLE CAMERON** WBC
U.K. • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
4 **ERICA FARIAS**
Argentina • 26-4-0 (10 KOs)
5 **KALI REIS** WBA
U.S. • 17-7-1 (5 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C **KATIE TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
Ireland • 17-0-0 (6 KOs)
1 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 44-3-0 (18 KOs)
2 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
3 **ESTELLE MOSSELY**
Belgium • 9-0-0 (1 KOs)
4 **MIRIAM GUTIERREZ**
Spain • 13-1-0 (5 KOs)
5 **NICOLE WESNER**
Germany • 16-0-0 (7 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **TERRI HARPER** WBC
U.K. • 11-0-1 (6 KOs)
2 **MAIVA HAMADOUCHE** IBF
France • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)
3 **MIKAELA MAYER** WBO
U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)
4 **HYUN MI CHOI** WBA
South Korea • 18-0-1 (4 KOs)
5 **EWA BRODNICKA**
Poland • 20-1-0 (2 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **AMANDA SERRANO** WBO
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)
2 **JELENA MRDJENOVICH** WBA, WBC
Canada • 41-10-2 (19 KOs)
3 **SARAH MAHFOUD**
Denmark • 10-0-0 (3 KOs)
4 **HEATHER HARDY**
U.S. • 22-1-0 (4 KOs)
5 **JENNIFER HAN** IBF
U.S. • 18-3-1 (1 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **JACKIE NAVA**
Mexico • 37-4-4 (16 KOs)
2 **MARCELA ACUNA** IBF
Argentina • 49-7-2 (20 KOs)
3 **DANIELA BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 29-4-3 (10 KOs)
4 **MAYERLIN RIVAS** WBA
Venezuela • 16-4-2 (10 KOs)
5 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 15-0-0 (6 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ZULINA MUNOZ**
Mexico • 52-3-2 (30 KOs)
2 **DEBORA DIONICIUS**
Argentina • 30-2-0 (6 KOs)
3 **YULIHAN LUNA AVILA** WBC
Mexico • 20-3-1 (3 KOs)
4 **MARIANA JUAREZ**
Mexico • 54-10-4 (18 KOs)
5 **MARIA CECILIA ROMAN** IBF
Argentina • 15-5-1 (0 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **LOURDES JUAREZ** WBC
Mexico • 31-2-0 (4 KOs)
2 **GUADALUPE MARTINEZ**
Mexico • 20-10-0 (6 KOs)
3 **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
Mexico • 30-5-3 (4 KOs)
4 **DIANA FERNANDEZ**
Mexico • 23-3-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ESMERALDA MORENO**
Mexico • 35-12-2 (11 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **NAOKO FUJIOKA** WBA
Japan • 18-2-1 (7 KOs)
2 **ARELY MUCINO** WBO
Mexico • 29-3-2 (10 KOs)
3 **AVA KNIGHT**
U.S. • 19-2-5 (5 KOs)
4 **MARLEN ESPARZA**
U.S. • 9-1-0 (1 KOs)
5 **IBETH ZAMORA** WBC
Mexico • 32-6-0 (12 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **YESICA BOPP** WBA
Argentina • 36-1-0 (16 KOs)
2 **KENIA ENRIQUEZ**
Mexico • 23-1-0 (9 KOs)
3 **TSUNAMI TENKAI** WBO
Japan • 28-12-1 (16 KOs)
4 **EVELYN BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 13-0-1 (3 KOs)
5 **KIM CLAVEL**
Canada • 13-0-0 (2 KOs)

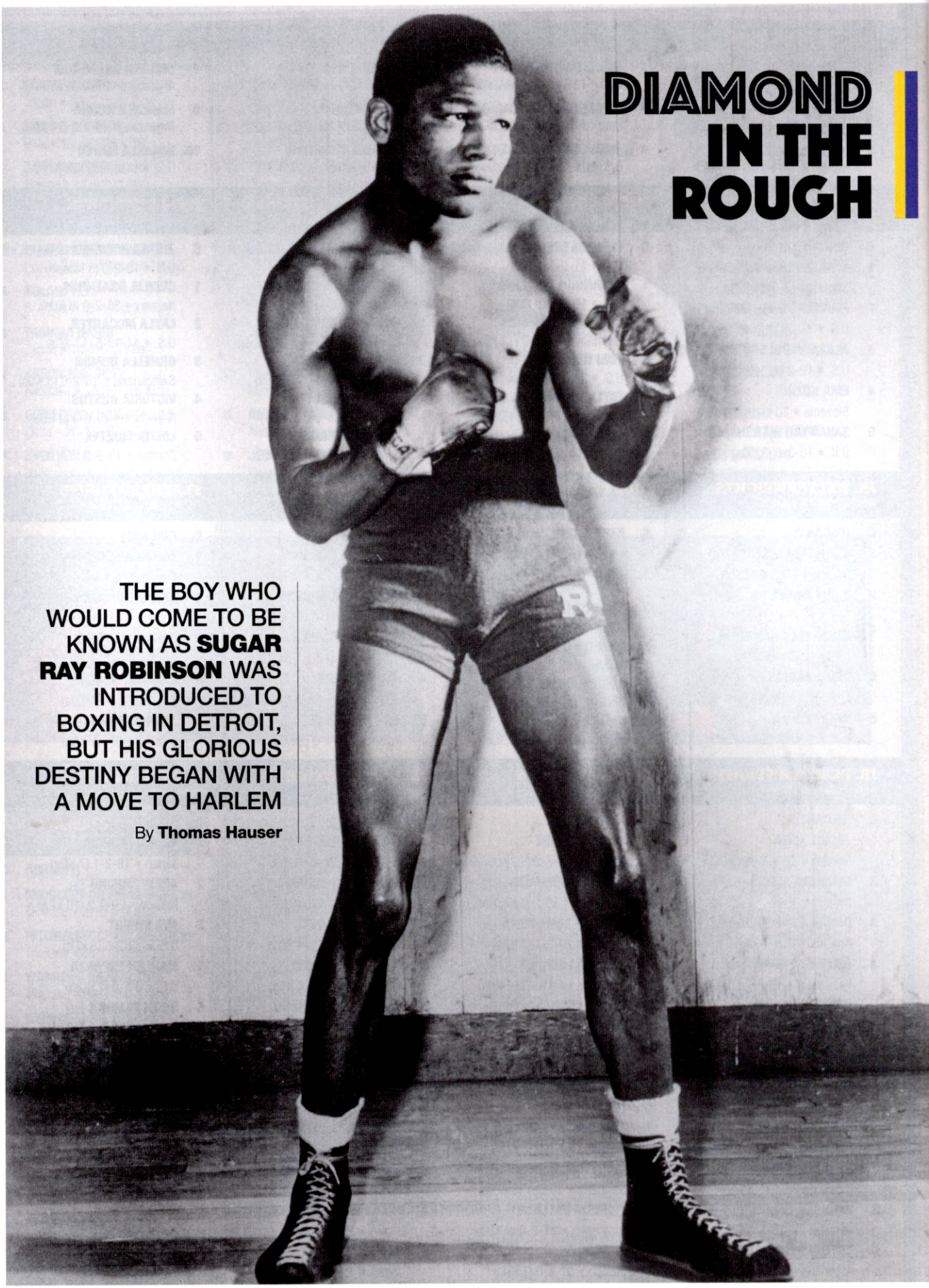
STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBA
Mexico • 20-0-0 (8 KOs)
1 **CHRISTINA RUPPRECHT** WBC
Germany • 10-0-1 (3 KOs)
3 **YOKASTA VALLE** IBF
Nicaragua • 21-2-0 (9 KOs)
2 **ANABEL ORTIZ**
Mexico • 31-4-0 (4 KOs)
4 **ETSUKO TADA**
Japan • 20-3-3 (7 KOs)

ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MONSERRAT ALARCON** WBA
Mexico • 15-4-2 (0 KOs)
2 **FABIANA BYTYQI** WBC
Czech Rep. • 17-0-1 (5 KOs)
3 **MIKA IWAKAWA** WBO
Japan • 10-5-1 (3 KOs)
4 **NAO IKEYAMA**
Japan • 18-6-4 (5 KOs)
5 **ERI MATSUDA**
Japan • 4-0-1 (1 KO)

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH



THE BOY WHO WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AS **SUGAR RAY ROBINSON** WAS INTRODUCED TO BOXING IN DETROIT, BUT HIS GLORIOUS DESTINY BEGAN WITH A MOVE TO HARLEM

By **Thomas Hauser**

In 1920, a man named Walker Smith moved from rural Georgia to Detroit and took a job as a construction worker. Several months later, his wife (Leila) and two daughters joined him. On May 3, 1921, Walker Smith Jr. (later known to the world as "Sugar Ray Robinson") was born.

Eventually, Leila Smith separated from her husband because of his abusive behavior and philandering ways. She took her children to Georgia, left them with her mother and returned to Detroit, where she worked as a maid at the Statler Hotel. Eventually, she saved enough money to bring her son and daughters back to Detroit. In 1932, they moved to New York. She rented an apartment in an area of the city known as Hell's Kitchen and found a job as a seamstress. At night, her son went to Times Square where theater patrons gathered on the sidewalk during intermission. He'd danced for them as they tossed coins his way. In 1933, the family moved to Harlem.

Walker Jr. quit school in ninth grade. Thereafter, he hustled on the streets and seemed destined for bad things. His life was saved by a journey into boxing that had begun haltingly years before. In 1928, when he was 7 years old, his mother had set aside 25 cents a month so he could spend time at the Brewster Recreation Center in Detroit, where he was introduced to the rudiments of boxing. He enjoyed the sport. But as he'd grown older, discipline was a problem.

Hall of Fame trainer Eddie Futch (who worked with amateurs in Detroit in the early 1930s) later recalled, "There was an 11-year-old who would come to the gym. He wasn't there to train; just hang out with his friends and make noise. One day, he made so much noise that I chased him out of the gym and told him not to come back until he was ready to behave himself."

Smith never came back. After his family moved to New York, he was introduced to George Gainford, who coached the boxing team for the Salem Crescent Athletic Club (located in the basement of the Salem Methodist Church in Harlem).

"At first, he didn't look like much of a fighter," Gainford said of the man who would later become the greatest fighter of all time. "All he did was hit and run. But he had one thing; he wanted to learn. He was the first kid in the gym and the last one to leave. He'd say to me, 'Suppose I do this; what do the other guy do?' I'd tell him, and then he'd say, 'And suppose I do this and this. Then what happens?'"

Dates blur when Walker Smith Jr.'s early years are discussed. What's clear is that there came a time when Gainford took a team from the Salem Crescent Athletic Club to a fight card in Kingston, New York. A club member who was slated to box in a flyweight bout that night failed to appear. Smith had made the trip with the team as a spectator and asked to take his place. But he'd never fought in an authorized bout and didn't have the requisite Amateur Athletic Union card.

Gainford shuffled through a stack of AAU cards that he carried with him and chose one with the name "Ray Robinson" (a fighter who had stopped coming to the gym). "That's you," he told Smith.

"Ray Robinson" won a unanimous decision. A week later, he returned to Kingston, fought again under the same name, and emerged victorious for the second time.

On January 5, 1939, Gainford and his team traveled to Watertown, New York, where "Ray Robinson" triumphed over a highly regarded amateur named Dom Perfetti. After the fight, Jack Case (sports editor for the Watertown Daily Times) told the coach, "That's a sweet fighter you've got there."

Some versions of the story say that what came next emanated from Gainford's lips. Others attribute it to a woman who was standing nearby and overheard the conversation. Everyone agrees that the next three words spoken were, "Sweet as Sugar."

The following day, Case's article in the Watertown Daily Times referenced "Sugar Ray Robinson."

A legend had been born.

Years later, Gainford would boast, "I'm the greatest trainer who ever lived. I trained Sugar Ray Robinson." The response he heard was, "George, you've had hundreds of fighters. Why weren't they all as good as Sugar Ray?"

Robinson's precise amateur record is unknown. Some sources credit him with 85 wins and 69 knockouts in 85 amateur fights with 40 of these knockouts coming in the first round. Others say that he lost three amateur bouts. He won the New York City Golden Gloves featherweight championship in 1939 and the lightweight title in 1940 at a time when New York was the center of the boxing world and amateur boxing mattered.

On September 19, 1940, he filed an application for a professional boxer's license with the New York State Athletic Commission. He listed his address as 215 West 116th Street in New York and his previous occupation as "tap dancer." The "name" entered on the application was "Walker Smith." The "ring name" was "Ray Robinson." He signed the application "Raymond Robinson."

On October 4, Robinson made his professional debut at Madison Square Garden and knocked out Joe Echevarria in the second round. Four nights later, he scored another second-round stoppage on a card in Savannah, Georgia. The extraordinary professional boxing career of the man who is the gold standard against which all fighters are judged had begun.

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – Staredown: Another Year Inside Boxing – *was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. In 2019, he was selected for boxing's highest honor - induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.*

AMERICAN STOCK ARCHIVE

A prime version of arguably the greatest fighter ever.

WE PUT *SPORTS* IN THE *SPOTLIGHT*

BRANDING, CONSULTING, MARKETING, PUBLICITY

GET IN TOUCH

BERNIE BAHRMASEL

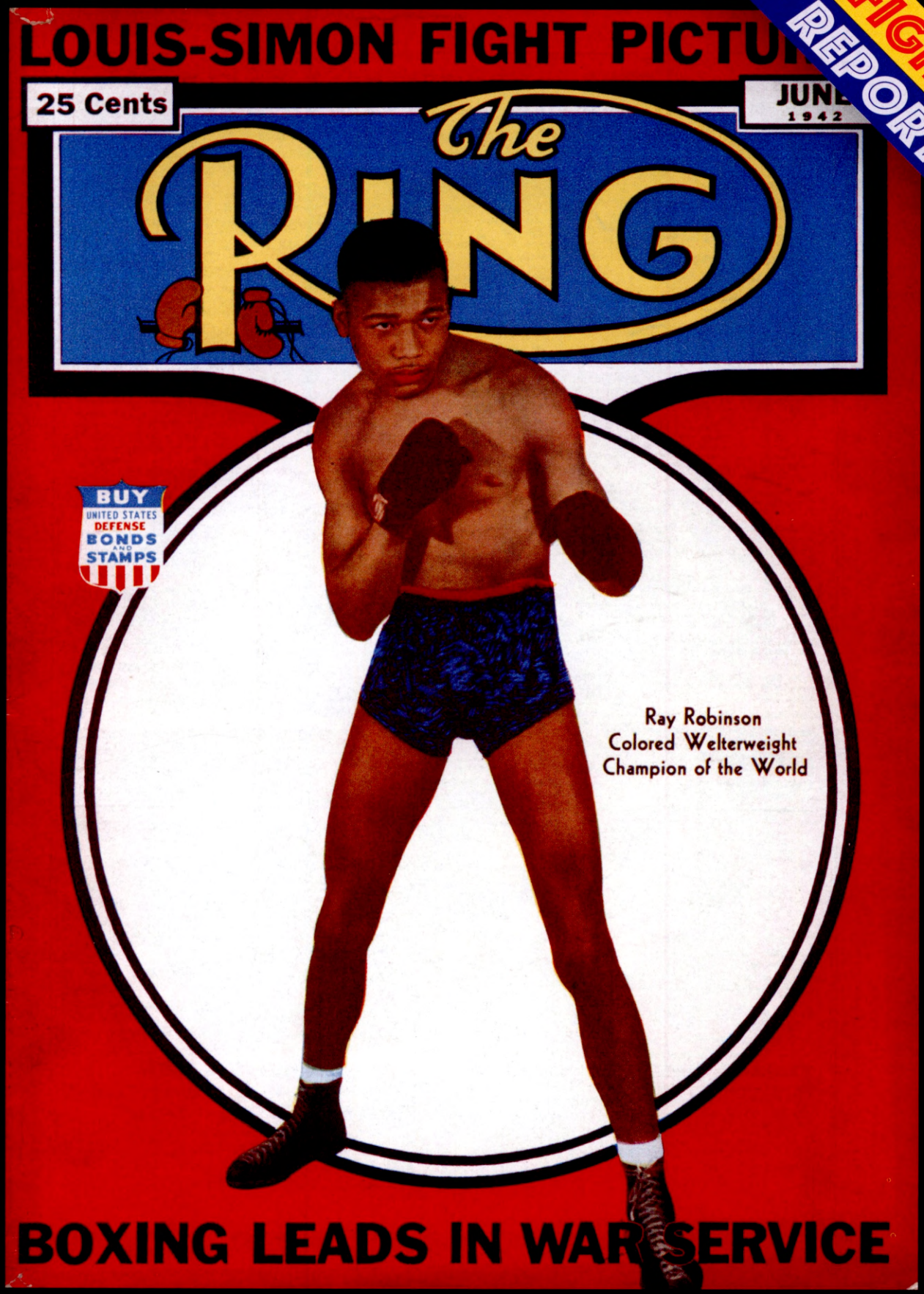
DOUBLE B SPORTS

MERCHANDISE MART, SUITE 921, CHICAGO, IL

+1 773 592-2986

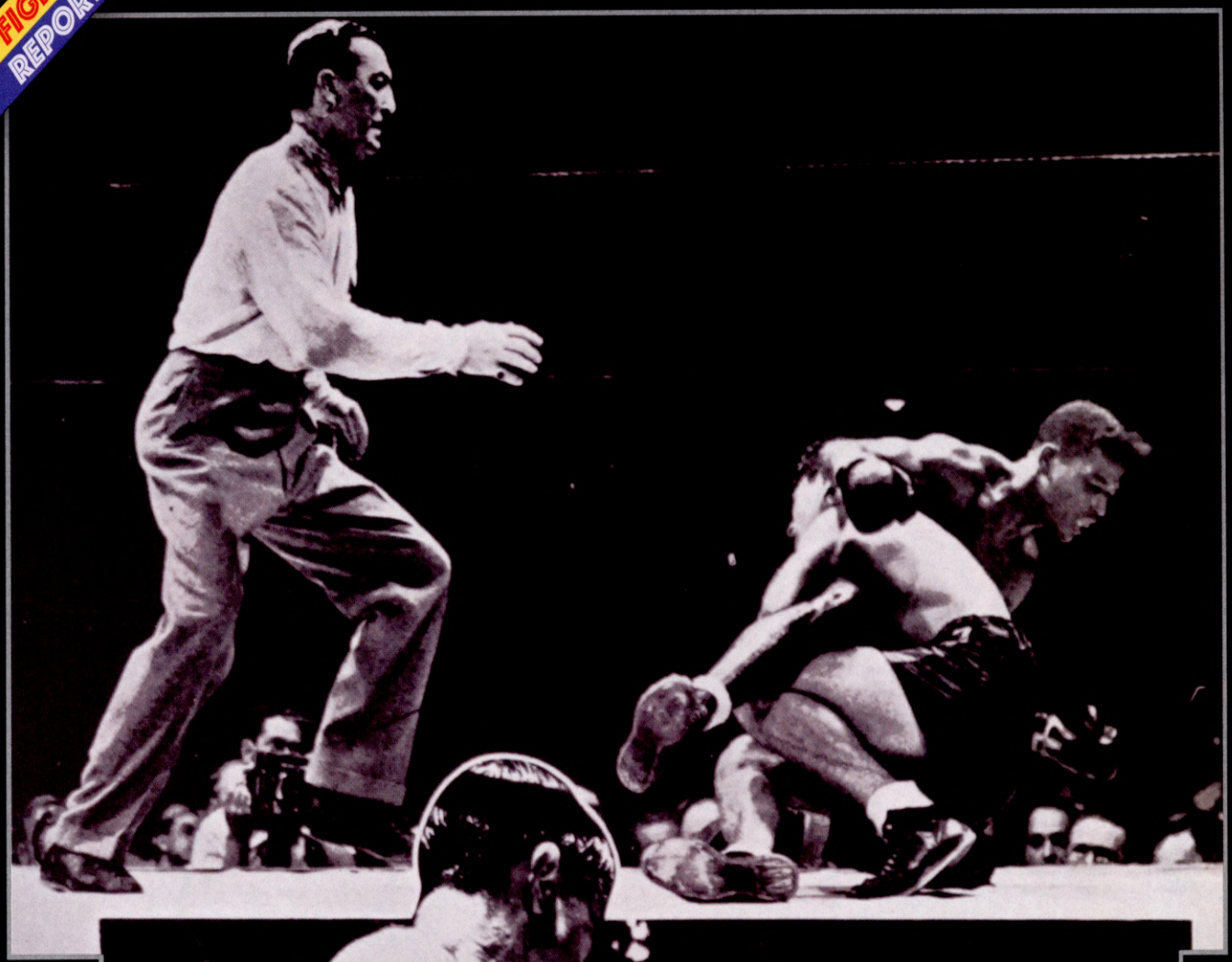
BERNIEBAHRMASEL@YAHOO.COM.

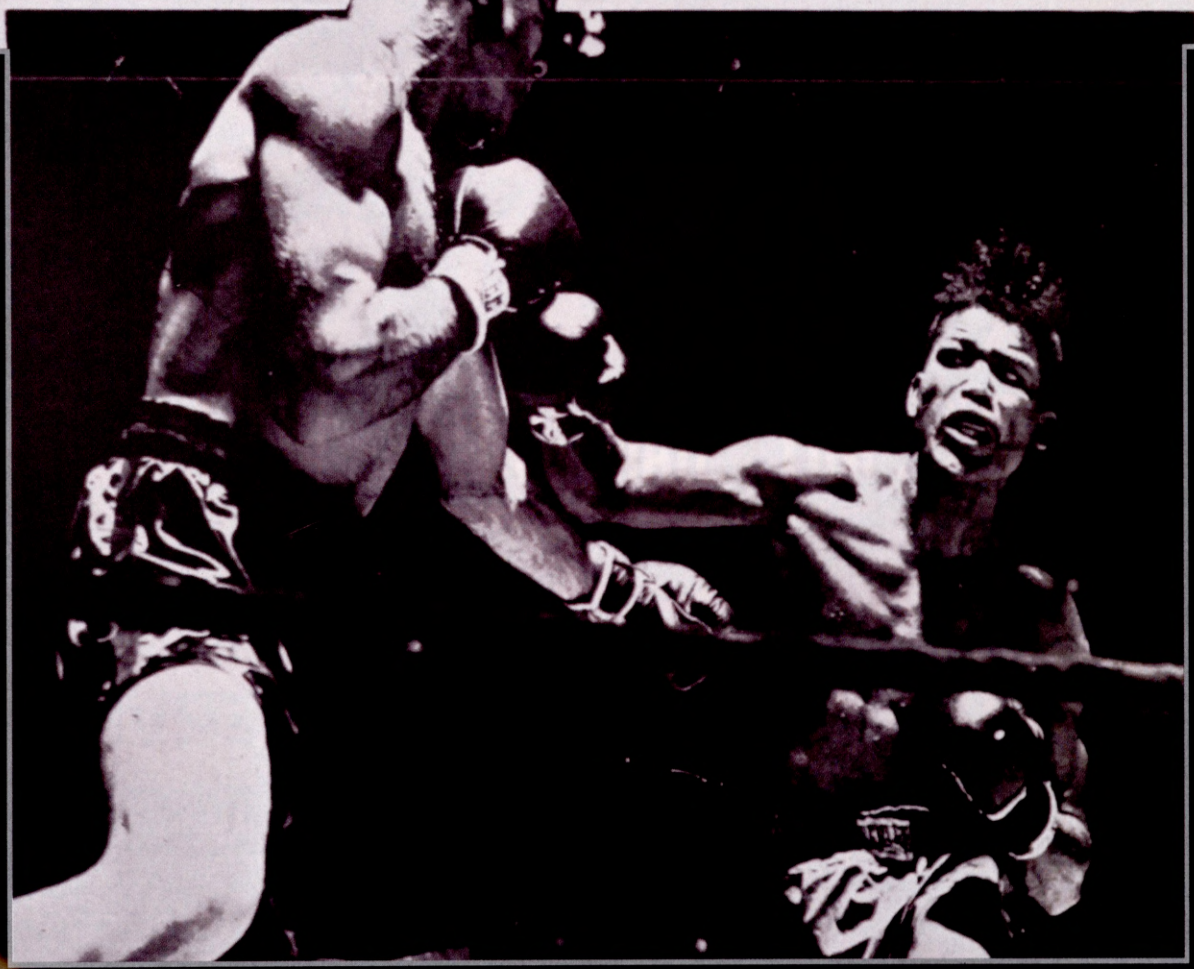
DOUBLE B SPORTS



FIGHT REPORT

ROBINSON APPEARED AS COVER STAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR JUNE 1942 ISSUE. THE FUTURE WELTERWEIGHT AND MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION WOULD BE FEATURED REGULARLY OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES. »





SUGAR RAY DEFEATS LIGHTWEIGHT KING SAMMY ANGOTT IN NON-TITLE AFFAIR

HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE FACT THAT HE'D RECENTLY OUTGROWN THE DIVISION, ROBINSON'S FIRST WORLD TITLE WOULD HAVE COME AT 135 POUNDS.

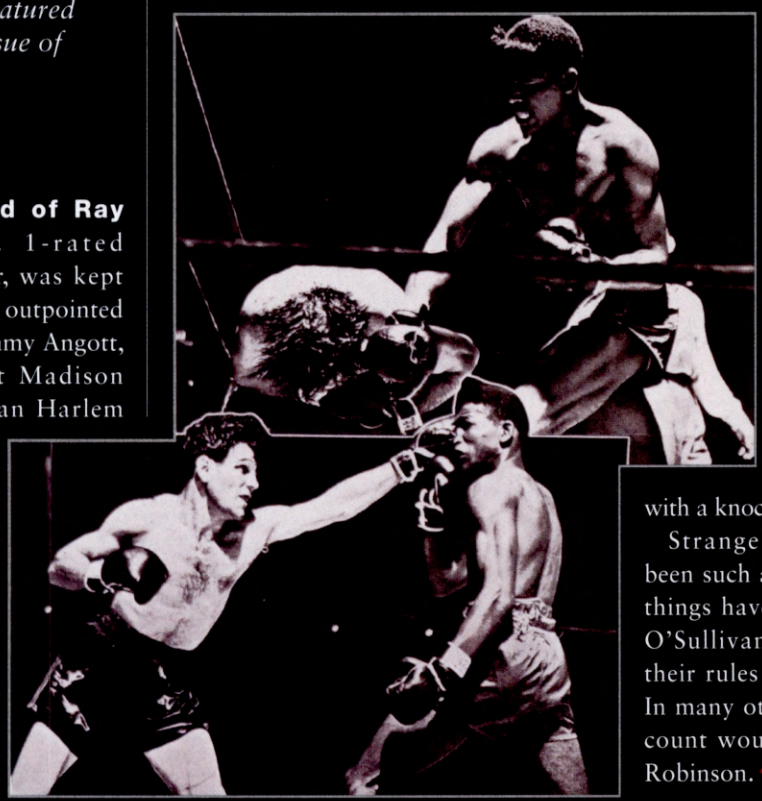
By **Nat Fleischer**

This fight report was featured in the October 1942 issue of The Ring Magazine.

The amazing record of Ray Robinson, our No. 1-rated welterweight challenger, was kept intact when he decisively outpointed the lightweight king, Sammy Angott, in a 10-round bout at Madison Square Garden. The lean Harlem fighter, light-limbed, clever as ever, spotted the champ two of the first three rounds, then turned loose with his startling speed to roll up round after round and take the verdict by a margin of six, two and two.

By his victory, Robinson piled up his 122nd triumph as a simon-pure and a pro, a record that will stand the test for many months. It was Ray's second straight victory over the titleholder in an over-the-weight match, and it is safe to say that if Robbie ever gets the chance to clash with Angott in a title fight, he will take the crown from him as he will from Red Cochrane should they clash in a welterweight championship mill. However, it is doubtful if Ray can make 135 pounds. He scaled 139½ for Sammy (who weighed) 144½ in their last engagement.

An odd situation arose in that fight, one that is seldom seen in boxing and which, when it has taken place, has ended in confusion. I refer to the double down in the eighth round. As Angott went to the canvas from a clout to the chin, he dragged Ray with him. Robinson went through the ropes and Jack O'Sullivan, knockdown timer, started the count.



ANGOTT got to his feet at the count of five and Robinson, who had scored the knockdown, was still outside the ropes. I have seen this happen before, and in every case prior to the Robinson-Angott battle, the officials erroneously stopped counting and waited for the man who landed the blow to get back into the ring.

But O'Sullivan, a veteran who knows his business, kept right on counting. Arthur Donovan, another expert, waved Angott to a neutral corner while he took up the continued count of the timer. When O'Sullivan reached seven, Robinson, realizing his plight, scrambled to his feet and at eight got back into the ring for action.

Following the contest, there was considerable discussion among the Robinson supporters as to the action of the officials in counting over the man who had almost scored a knockout. "He wasn't downed," said one enthusiast to me. "Why did they count over him?"

The answer is that the officials did the proper thing. Had Robinson not been able to return to the ring before 10, he would have been counted out. Thus the man who was bombarded with punches, who was on the verge of a kayo and was dropped in his tracks, would have been credited with a knockout over his conqueror.

Strange indeed would have been such an ending. Yet stranger things have happened in boxing. O'Sullivan and Donovan knew their rules and lived up to them. In many other boxing centers, no count would have been given to Robinson.

FIGHT REPORT

SUGAR VERSUS BRONX BULL FIGHTS II & III

FIGHT TWO – SUGAR SETBACK

ROBINSON'S FIRST LOSS AS A PROFESSIONAL, FOLLOWING 40 STRAIGHT WINS, CAME AGAINST THE FIERCE AND SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER **JAKE LAMOTTA**. SUGAR RAY WOULD REACH 129-1-2 BEFORE LOSING AGAIN

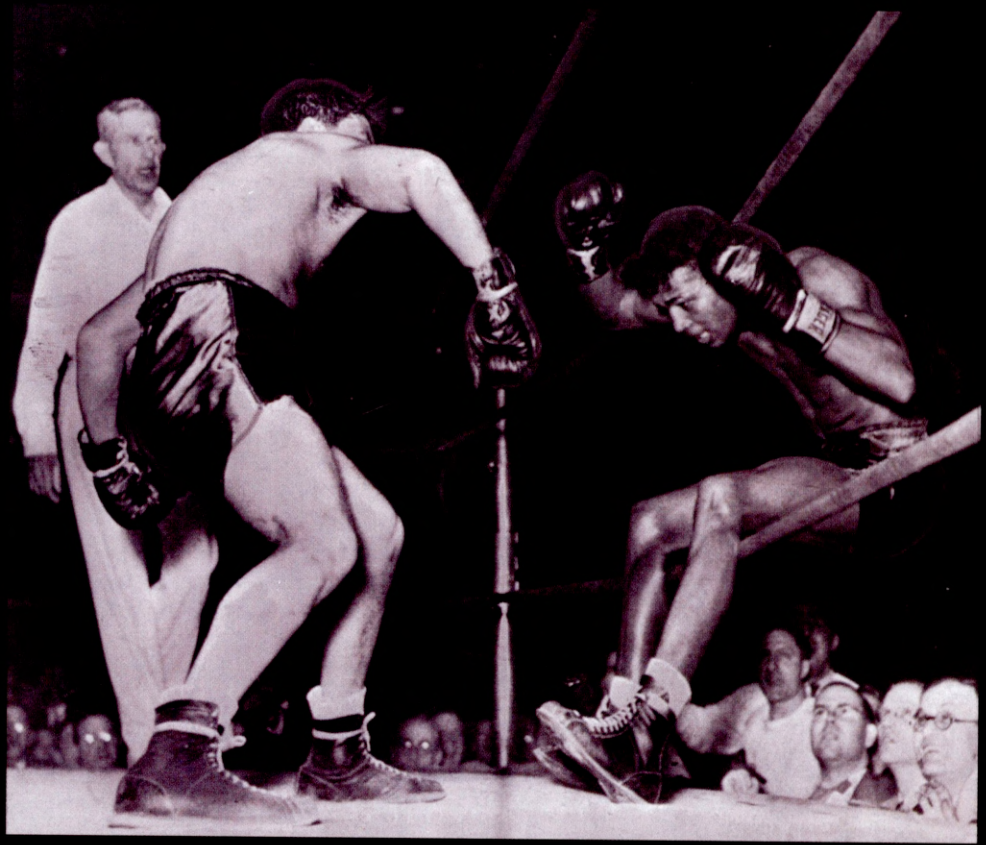
By **The Ring**

This brief fight report was originally printed in the April 1943 issue of The Ring Magazine.

WHEN Jacob LaMotta of the Bronx subjected the invincible Ray Robinson to his first defeat in 41 battles as a pro, he added to his prestige as one of the rising middleweights of the country. The 16-pound advantage he held over Ray was a huge handicap for the hitherto undefeated fighter, who, with his amateur bouts, had tallied 129 straight victories. The contest was a thriller, with LaMotta carrying off six of 10 rounds. Now they are matched for a rubber contest in the Garden, which will be Ray's last before entering the service, to which he has been drafted, and this could result in another sellout gathering.

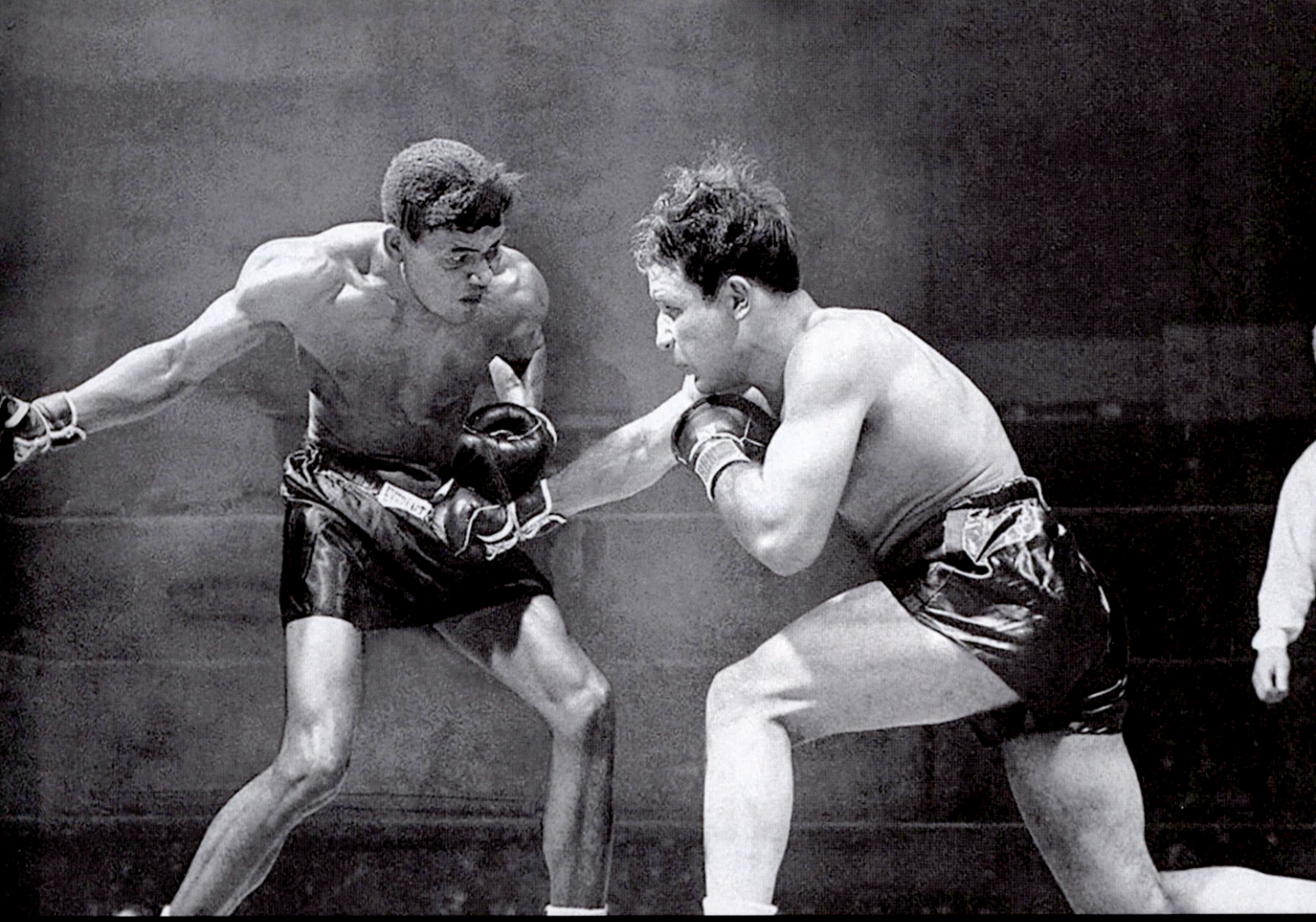
Not only did Jake win the majority of the sessions, but he also had Ray down for a count of nine in the eighth round with a body blow that took the wind out of the welterweight. As in most of his bouts, Ray kept shooting his left to the head with such frequency that it seemed he would win the Detroit mill as easily as he did their first contest in New York, but as the bout progressed, LaMotta got the range, and by boring in and tossing punches from all angles, he forced Ray to break ground.

From the sixth to the 10th, Jake had things his own way. The awkward fighter from the Bronx smothered Ray with body wallops and chased Ray all over the ring. In the ninth, Robinson's retreat displeased the crowd.



LaMotta's relentless attack and superior size made him a formidable foe for Sugar Ray.

HANK OLENN/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES



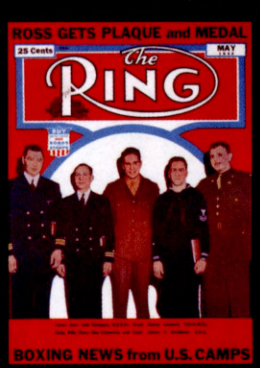
HANK OLEN/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Sugar Ray Robinson winds up with a mighty haymaker to throw at Jake Lamotta.

FIGHT THREE – RAY'S REVENGE

JUST THREE WEEKS AFTER LOSING TO LAMOTTA, ROBINSON WAS BACK IN THE RING WITH HIS CONQUEROR. BETTER YET, HE WARMED UP FOR THE BOUT BY OUTPOINTING CALIFORNIA JACKIE WILSON.

This brief fight report was originally printed in the May 1943 issue of The Ring Magazine.



THE Pride of Harlem, in his return engagement with LaMotta, in Detroit, proved that he is America's ace drawing card by again appearing on a card that drew more than $60,000. The contest, which went the limit of 10 rounds with Ray getting the unanimous decision, grossed $60,710 and had an attendance of 15,149 spectators. Again the affair, as their previous one in the Motor City, was staged at the Olympia Stadium, and this time Ray gave away to his opponent 15¾ pounds, LaMotta scaling 160¾ pounds. The amount grossed topped that which Joe Louis drew in his lone appearance in Detroit, against Abe Simon.

Sugar Ray's ring strategy is what accounted for the victory. Whenever LaMotta rushed forth, as is his style, Ray side-stepped or stepped back, then greeted Jake with an assortment of blows, chief of which was a most significant right uppercut. LaMotta grew stronger as the fight wore on, primarily because of his weight advantage, but Robinson had rolled up enough points in the early rounds to enable him to retain his advantage to the end, despite the booing of the throng at the verdict.

In the seventh round, LaMotta caught Ray with a straight left that dropped the Harlem Sugar Boy for a count of eight, and when Ray got back to his feet, he found an aggressive, two-fisted fighter at him to the bell. Referee [Sam] Hennessey gave Ray six rounds and his rival two with two even, but the majority of the scores saw the bout a little closer.

Ray did a superb boxing job. He was out for revenge because of the loss of the only battle chalked up against him in his entire career, the previous bout with LaMotta, and the soldier did everything effectively to turn the tide. Tired as he was at times, he boxed brilliantly, though he was forced towards the end to hold often to save himself. LaMotta's weight handicap had proved too great.

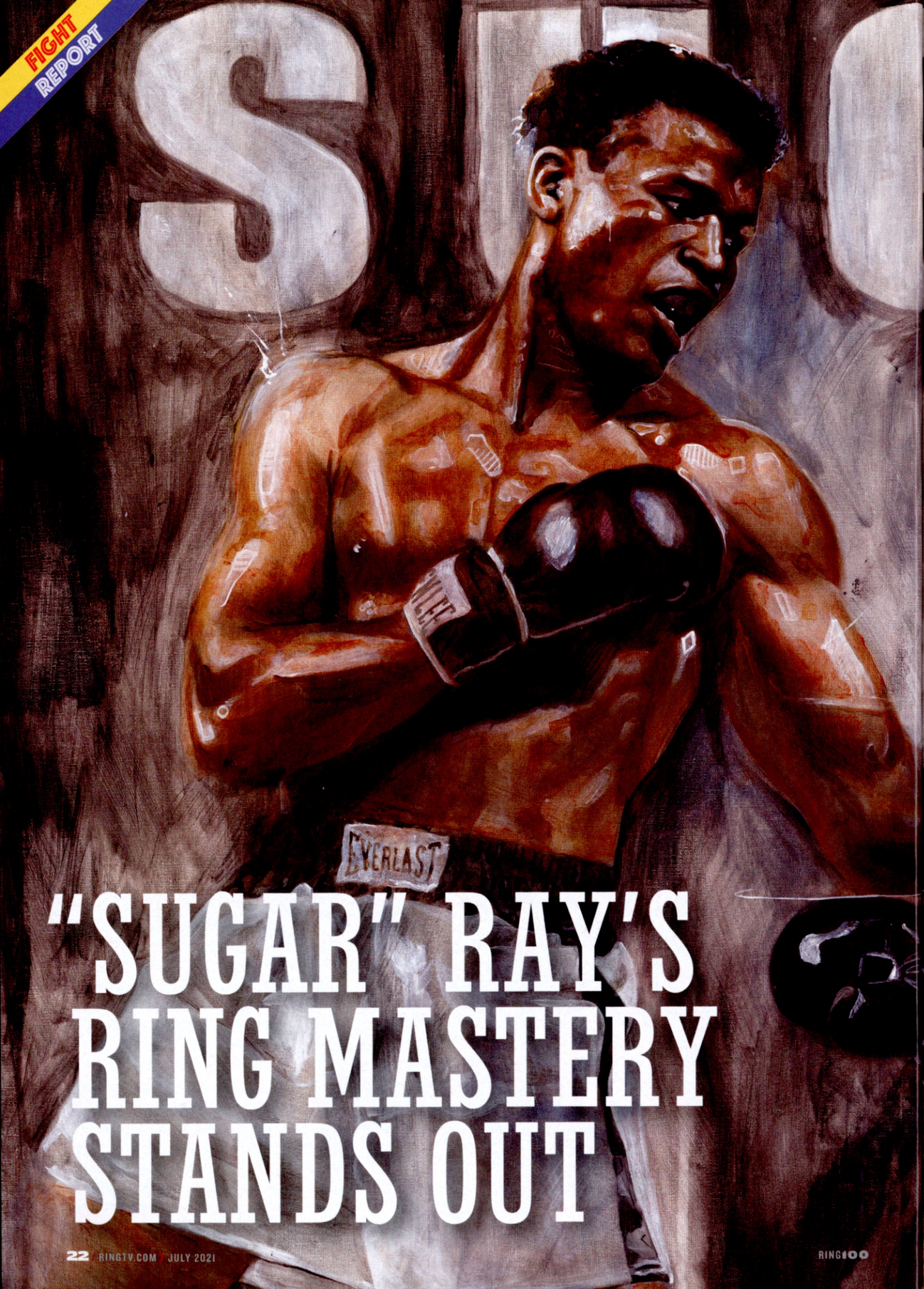
FIGHT REPORT

SLUGFAIR

WEIGHT ORDEAL AND **KID GAVILAN'S** RUSHING TACTICS FAIL TO CHECK **ROBINSON** – GIVES GREAT EXHIBITION IN RETAINING WORLD WELTERWEIGHT TITLE.

By **Nat Fleischer**

"SUGAR" RAY'S RING MASTERY STANDS OUT



Richard J. Slone @SLONEART

This fight report was originally printed in the September 1949 issue of The Ring Magazine.

SUCCESS marked the fourth defense of the world welterweight title by Ray Robinson in his return engagement with Kid Gavilan, and with it, Sugar Ray displayed one of the finest brands of boxing seen in a championship match in many moons. Although the champ has lost much of what made fight critics call him the greatest battler of the era in any weight division, he still carried enough of his skill and punch to enable him to come through with the unanimous decision at the Municipal Stadium of Philadelphia before a gathering of 27,805 paying fans, who put into the box office the sum of $175,754.

It was a masterful exhibition, the best the wearer of the crown had put forth in any of the contests in which his title has been at stake, and by his splendid performance, Sugar Ray proved that he can still make the welterweight limit, tough though it is on him, and retain much of the qualities that have made him one of the best fighting machines of the past quarter century.

It was not a contest of many thrills. But for those who like to see a skillful exhibition, Robinson obliged. The battle was sufficiently stirring to keep the spectators on edge from start to finish. Ray furnished the clever portion of the mill and his opponent, the aggressiveness, which, though not as effective as was the display of all-around ability of the champion, met with the approval of the gathering. Ray paced himself beautifully.

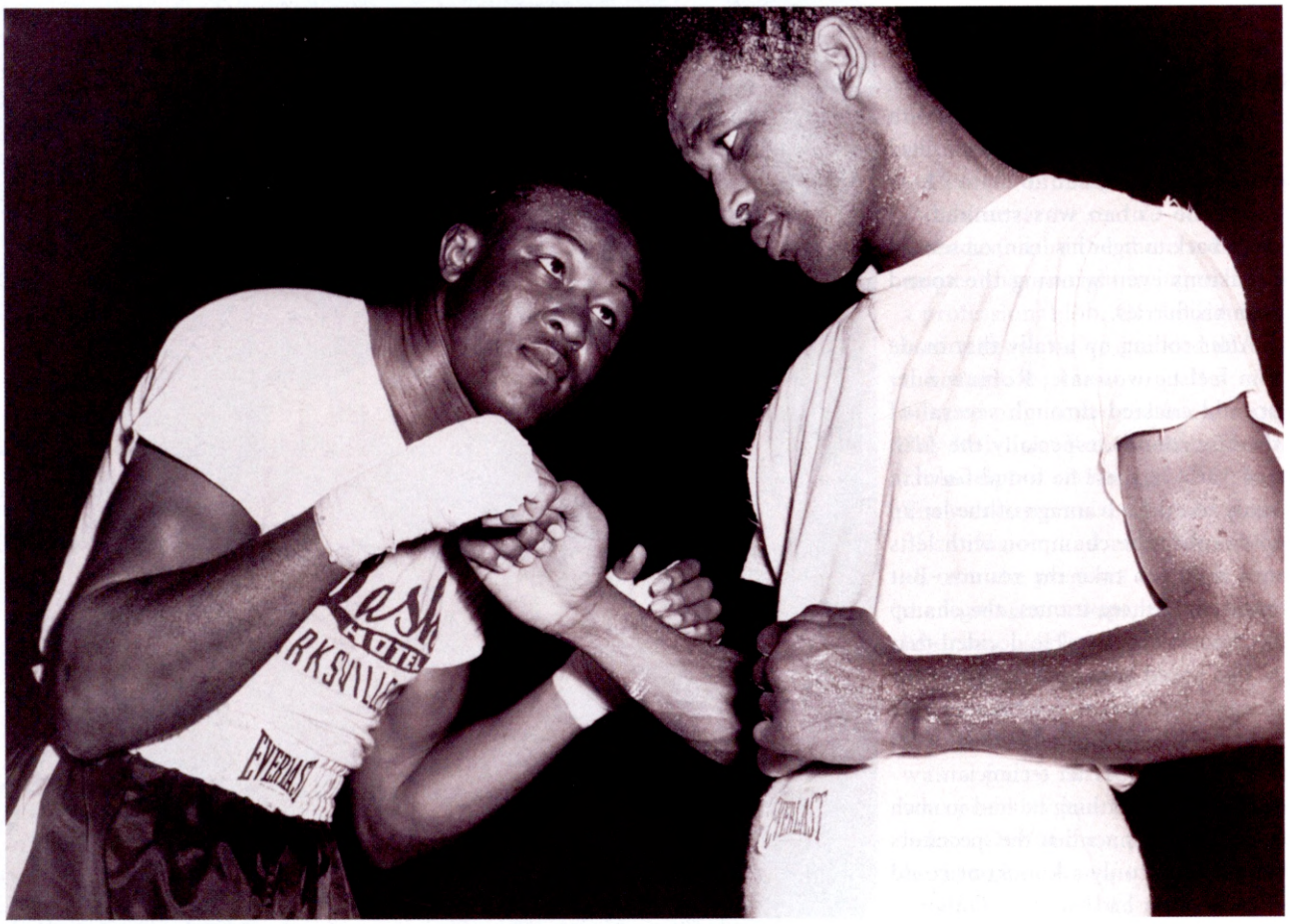
There were many dissenters in the crowd, particularly among the great number of Cubans, many of whom had made a special trip from Havana to back their man – and support him they did with plenty of dough. But there could be no doubt about the winner. Referee Charley Daggert, who did a good job as third man in the ring, gave it nine to six rounds in favor of the titleholder. So did one of the judges, Harry Lasky, while the other judge, Frank Knarsborough, seemed far off the beam when he turned in a score of 12 rounds to three for Ray.

The fight was far closer than that. My card showed Robinson the winner, eight rounds to five, with two even.

GAVILAN proved himself a fearless, two-fisted, determined battler, who, regardless of the blows landed

Champion and challenger sign for their eagerly anticipated rematch.

BETTMANN



BETTMANN

on him, kept coming in at all times, ready to mix it when the opportunity presented itself. But while he was sufficiently active to make things most interesting for Ray, he was not as effective. Many of his punches landed on the elbows or back, and a number hit the ozone as wild swings, and while this was going on, his opponent used his jabs and hooks to good advantage. That Gavilan was far better than any of the opponents Robinson had met since he gained the crown cannot be denied, but it takes more than courage to overcome the skill of the champ and the paralyzing punch of Sugar Ray. Gavilan's blows were weak in comparison to those of his opponent, though several times he did shake up the titleholder.

Despite the one-sided scoring of the officials and many of the scribes, the contest was a most interesting and satisfying one. Gavilan's performance was such as to make Ray admit that he feared to take chances. In the fourth round, Sugar Ray suffered a cut over the right eye that bled

Gavilan sought revenge and the welterweight crown.

throughout the bout, and Robinson was afraid that this might be opened to such an extent that the medical advisor to the boxing commission would intervene. But he was fortunate in that the cut didn't widen any after that session.

The Cuban ripped and slashed at his opponent in every round. There was no let-up in his aggressiveness, but aggressiveness alone cannot win a fight against a man who possesses all the ring assets of Sugar Ray Robinson, a champion who, from the start of his pro career, has proved that he belongs with the aces of pugilism in the Fistic Hall of Fame.

Gavilan's lunges were responsible for the high score rolled up by Ray because he played right into the hands of the defending champion by the very style he employed against Robinson. He never stopped trying, however, and that's what made a good fight of it.

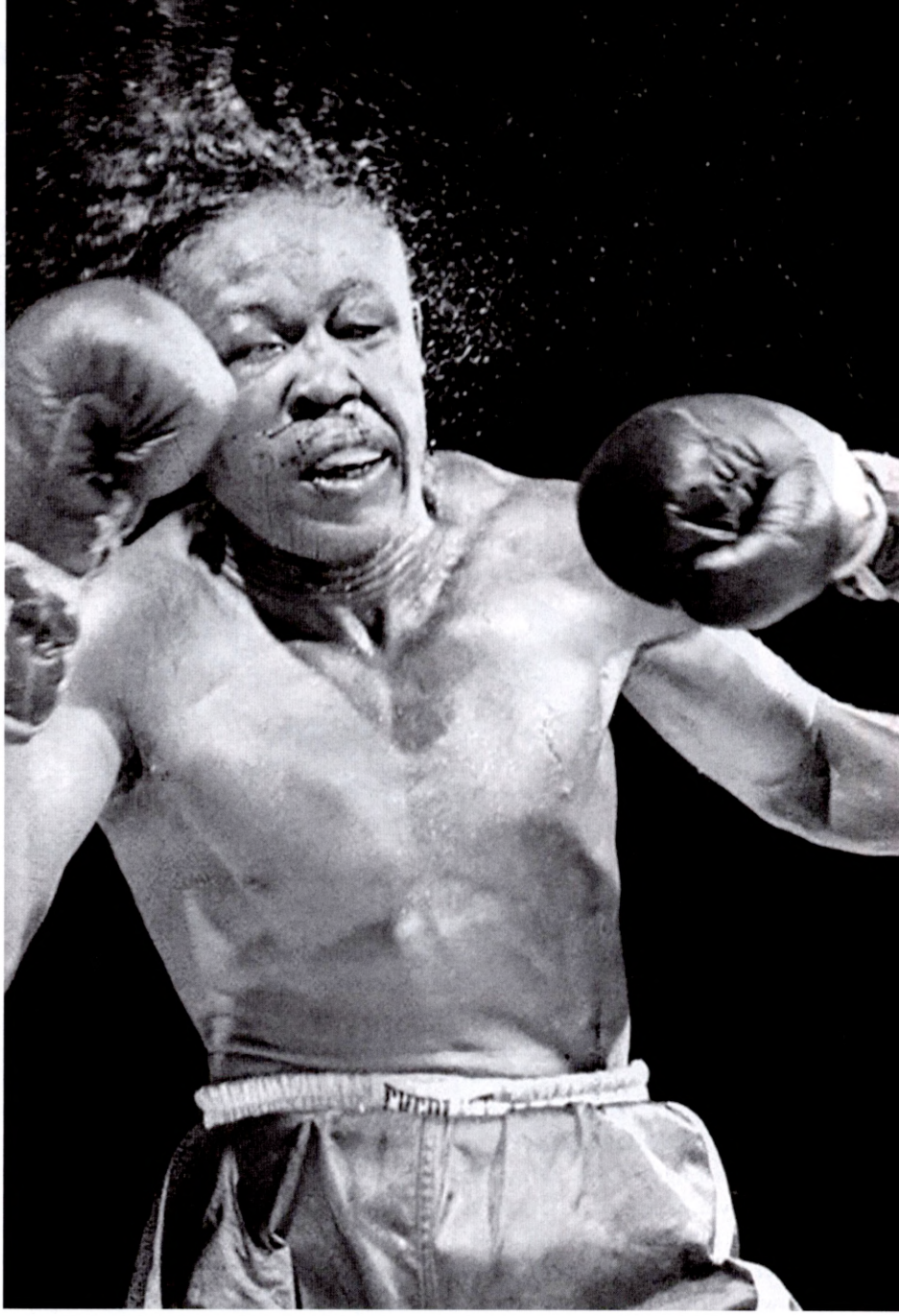
IF stamina and courage alone could win a title, then Gavilan would have won it from Robinson. The combative welterweight from Camaguey, Cuba, who has never been knocked out, demonstrated his ruggedness against his 28-year-old veteran opponent as has no other fighter done against Ray with the exception of Jake LaMotta, whom Ray has licked four times out of five. Robinson has rolled up 96 victories in a professional career that shows only one defeat (which

"RAY WEAVED HIS HEAD, HIS GUARD DOWN, AND LET MOST OF THE VOLLEY STRIKE THE AIR OR HIS SHOULDERS"

Jake handed out to him) and two draws. Ray blocked Gavilan's rushes, countered brilliantly and cleverly with sharp, accurate lefts that often drilled the Kid's mouth, but no matter how often the Cuban was stunned, he came back to fight his man, on several occasions even winning the round with his flurries.

After rolling up a tally that made him feel he was safe, Robinson let up and coasted through several of the late rounds, especially the 11th and 12th. In these he found Gavilan ready to take advantage of the let-up to smother the champion with lefts and rights to take the rounds. But in the final three frames, the champ showed at his best. He decided that he had paced himself properly for the distance and let go in a manner that was a reminder of the Sugar Ray of past years, the master technician.

He used everything he had in such convincing manner that the spectators realized that only a knockout could win the title for Gavilan. Only the Cuban reporters and those who wagered heavily on the Kid thought otherwise.



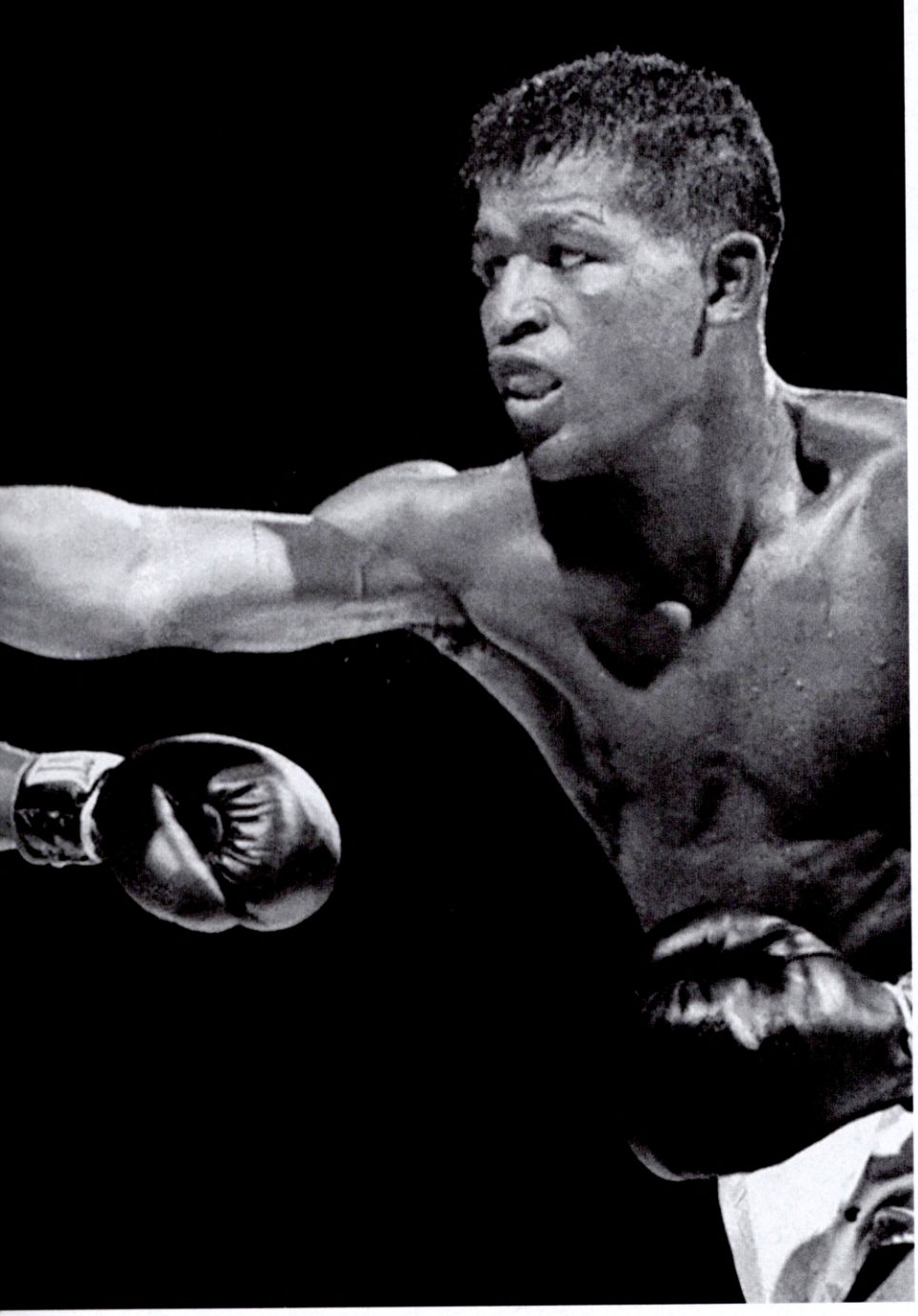
IN the 14th, though Ray won the session, he gave Gavilan an opportunity to gain the cheers of his followers when he remained against the ropes for almost a minute and permitted the Kid to let go a volley which ringsiders noticed did little damage, but which those in the grandstand seats figured to be most effective. Ray weaved his head, his guard down, and let most of the volley strike the air or his shoulders.

But after the volley was over, the champ took command again. He opened up in the 15th with everything he had and for a time it appeared that the Cuban might be dropped, so effective was the defending titleholder's attack. He staggered the Kid with a left hook to the jaw and followed with a beautiful uppercut that almost took the Cuban off his feet. Ringsiders could hear the groans of the Cuban reporters as the blow landed.

Then came a straight left that crashed flush on Gavilan's jaw and again the Cuban was shaken by the punch. That round was Ray's best, a finish which was quite unexpected because of the difficulty the champ had in making weight. He tipped the beam at exactly 147, the top limit of the division, as against 144½ for his opponent

In the first six rounds, it was anybody's fight. The challenger gave as much as he received and for a time had the champ's manager, George Gainford, worried. But after the sixth, there was no doubt about Ray not only being able to carry on for the full 15 sessions if necessary, but holding his own against the sturdy attack of his incoming opponent.

Contrary to expectations, it was Gavilan and not Sugar Ray who showed first signs of tiring from the fast pace set, and it was only after Ray became aware of it that he opened up on the Cuban. The lost art of feinting – an art made famous by Jack Johnson – was seen to such an extent in Robinson's display that I don't recall a fight in recent years when such excellent feinting was on display. He used his shoulders, hands and feet in getting his opponent out of position, and then blasted his face with straight jolts and hooked with precision to the body.



NY DAILY NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The challenger had his moments, but Robinson's sharpshooting kept him a step ahead.

"SUGAR" RAY'S RING MASTERY STANDS OUT

NEITHER was much marked when the fight was over. Ray's cut eye was all he had suffered in injuries, and the Cuban had a bruised face and was bleeding from the nose. He suffered more through the decision, it seemed, than he did from Ray's fists, judging by the dejected look of the Kid as he left the arena with tears in his eyes, his chance to carry back to Cuba a crown he was certain he would win, having been lost through superior craftsmanship of the titleholder.

The Cuban tried to bull Ray in the early rounds in an attempt to capitalize on his supposed weakness due to weight reduction, but Robinson, though his bones showed clearly, like that of a human skeleton, so fine that he reduced, displayed no physical weakness. But Ray admitted after the battle that he would like to steer clear of his title and enter the higher class if he would be assured a title bout with Jake LaMotta.

"It's beginning to tell on me," he remarked. "Two years ago, I would have knocked out an opponent if I had him in the condition I had Gavilan in the 15th round, but age and weight have crept up on me. Coming in at 147 pounds is a task."

There were no knockdowns. The fourth was the Cuban's best frame, and the 15th was Robinson's best.

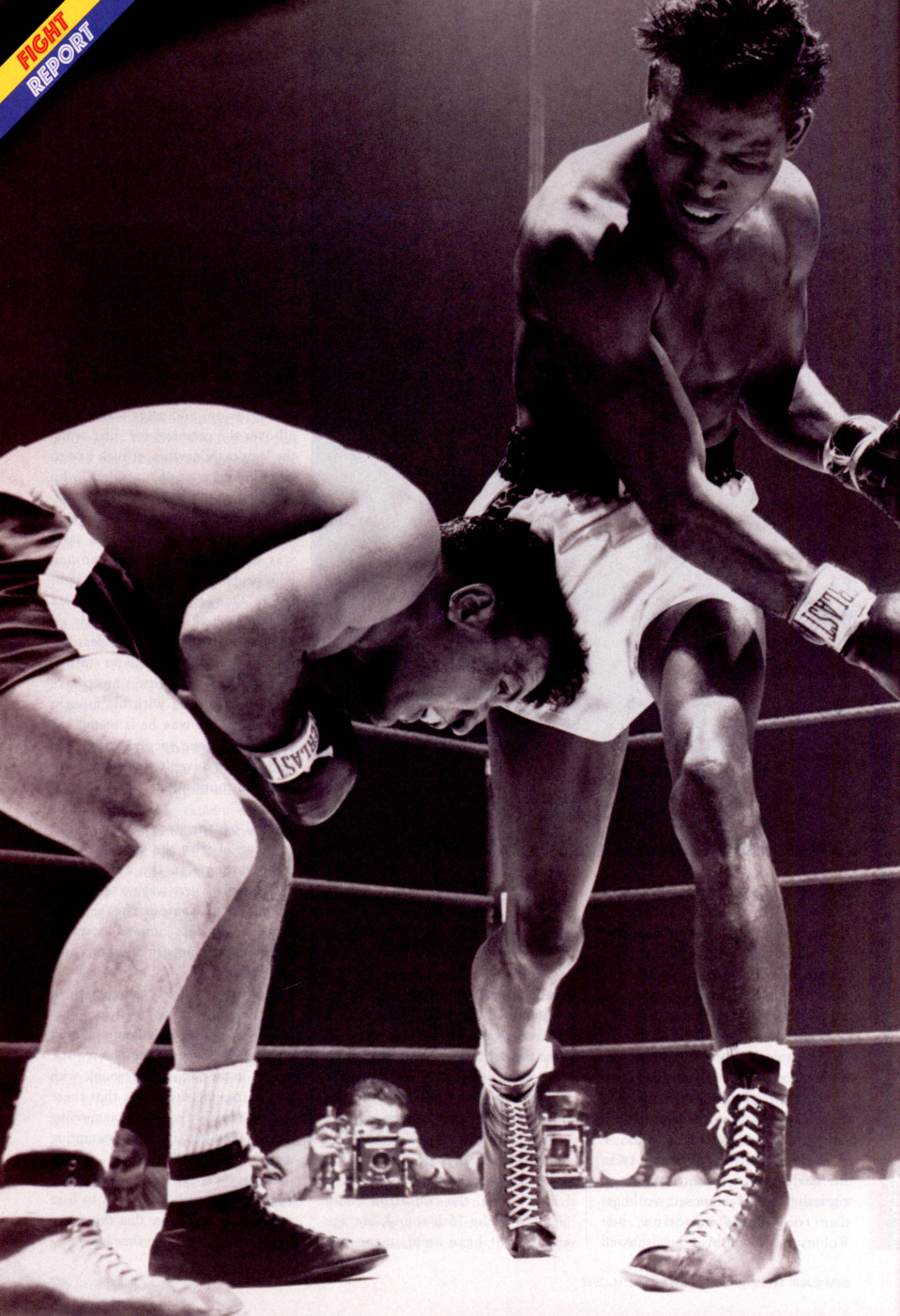
IT'S an old saying that a boy should never be sent to do a man's errand, and by the same token, an amateur has no right trying to handle a professional job. Of thousands of boxing shows we've attended through the years, we cannot recall a more bungled or mismanaged one than the Ray Robinson-Kid Gavilan affair in Philadelphia's Municipal Stadium. The working press section was a mess of confusion, and after scrambling all over the premises for their seats, the legitimate newspaper men had to labor among a lot of "outsiders" who cluttered up the place.

Crowded in against a couple of members of the THE RING staff was a party of men and women who probably had never seen a fight before. One of the men, trying to act as though he knew what it was all about, apparently had never heard of mouthpieces. When the bout started, he remarked: "Robinson must have something wrong with his mouth; look at all the wax he is using." At the close of the second round, he said: "They haven't started to fight yet. Two rounds gone, and nobody's bleeding."

One of the worst messes in connection with the show was the unholy tangle in the automobile parking lots. There was no semblance of order or system there; with thousands of cars jammed in, it was everybody for himself, and Lord help the hindmost.

There was no excuse for it all. Big-time boxing is nothing new in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania metropolis is one of the oldest fistic centers in the nation. The trouble with this particular show was that there was no experienced promoter running it. Instead, it was an outfit attempting its first major outdoor card.

If this crowd wants to keep operating, it would do well to hire an efficient staff to see that things are conducted on a real big-time basis.



RAY ROBINSON STIRS UP ACTION IN THREE CLASSES

NEW MIDDLEWEIGHT KING'S TRIUMPH OVER **LAMOTTA** UNFREEZES THAT CLASS, LEAVES WELTER TITLE VACANT AND ANIMATES LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

By **Nat Fleischer**

This feature originally appeared in the April 1951 issue of The Ring Magazine.

BETTMANN

Fight six, the aptly named "St. Valentine's Day Massacre," was the most brutal bout of the Robinson-LaMotta series.

RAY ROBINSON'S decisive victory over Jake LaMotta in the 13th round of their middleweight championship fight in Chicago on the night of Wednesday, February 14, by what Illinois rules call "a technical knockout," was a tremendous break for boxing. It has stirred three classes.

In the first place, it shifted the middleweight title, and stirred up action in that class. The fight unfroze the division.

In the second place, it left the welterweight championship of the world open. Robinson abdicated as welter king just as soon as his achievement of the middleweight title became official. That was the agreement.

In the third place, it animated the light heavyweight class, in which Joey Maxim has been playing solitaire.

Now we are to have a series of welter eliminations involving, in the order of their ranking by The Ring Magazine, Kid Gavilan, of Cuba; Billy Graham, New York; Charley Fusari, New Jersey; Johnny Bratton, Chicago; Eddie Thomas of England, and possibly Johnny Saxton, Robinson's Harlem protégé.

Robinson may not be content with defending the middleweight title.

It is conceivable that Sugar Ray will try for a match with Joey Maxim. He is eager for such a fight.

Also in the offing is another, a seventh meeting between Robinson and LaMotta, who definitely is a middleweight no longer, and now will go into the light heavyweight division.

In the middleweight class, with LaMotta eliminated by the weight situation, Robinson is confronted with the title ambitions of France's Laurent Dauthuille, who last summer had Jake whipped in the 15th but was stopped in the closing half minute; Dave Sands of Australia, triple champion Down Under; Randy Turpin of England and Gene Hairston of New York.

What with one thing and another, Ray's victory over LaMotta gave the game about as glorious a shot in the arm as anything that has happened since Ezzard Charles trounced Joe Louis. In fact, Robinson's success should spur even more important developments.

Boxing's greatest triumph since Henry Armstrong defeated Barney Ross to win the world welterweight title was achieved by Sugar Ray when he halted Jake before 14,802 persons who paid a gross of $180,619.64 to see two champions fight it out.

Although Ray had to relinquish his welter title after he had won, under an agreement with the Illinois Boxing Commission and the N.B.A., his name will go down in the records of pugilism as a boxer who held both welter and middleweight crowns at one time.

Ray lived up to the expectations of those who made him an odds-on favorite to dethrone the Bronx Bull.

The match had been hailed as promising the most outstanding ring battle of recent years, and so it proved, to the thousands who crowded the Chicago Stadium and the millions who viewed it on television. The bout will go down in ring history as a truly great performance by a slugger and a scientific boxer.

Jake's bulldog rushes were in evidence for ten of the 13 rounds, and during that period, though LaMotta was behind on points, in the press rows, he did considerable damage to Ray.

In fact, the officials thought so well of Jake's work that they had him in the lead at that point. But at no time after the 10th did LaMotta have a chance. He had shot his bolt. His steam was gone and his body punching had lost its effectiveness.

It didn't take Sugar Ray long to take advantage of the collapse of his opponent. Robbie cut loose with face and body blows that soon had LaMotta groggy. But no matter how many punches Robbie tossed, he couldn't down his rival and Jake was able to quit the ring with the boast that throughout his career he never had been knocked down.

Under Illinois regulations, Robinson got credit only for a "technical knockout," but no man ever was more clearly out than LaMotta when referee Frank Sikora stopped the contest.

COMBINING skill and superlative punching power, using a left with devastating effect in almost every round, Robinson excelled the defending champion in every department.

Ray gave one of the most masterful exhibitions seen in a ring for years and left no doubt in the minds of the fans that he is what so often has been said of him, the greatest fighting machine of the age.

In the final round, so severe a shellacking did LaMotta receive that shouts of "stop it" rent the air. The referee wasn't guided by those voices. He took cue from Dr. Houston, medical advisor to the commission, and halted the slaughter. Such it was in the last stages of the affair. It was a massacre of one of the sturdiest, hard-hitting middleweights the division has had.

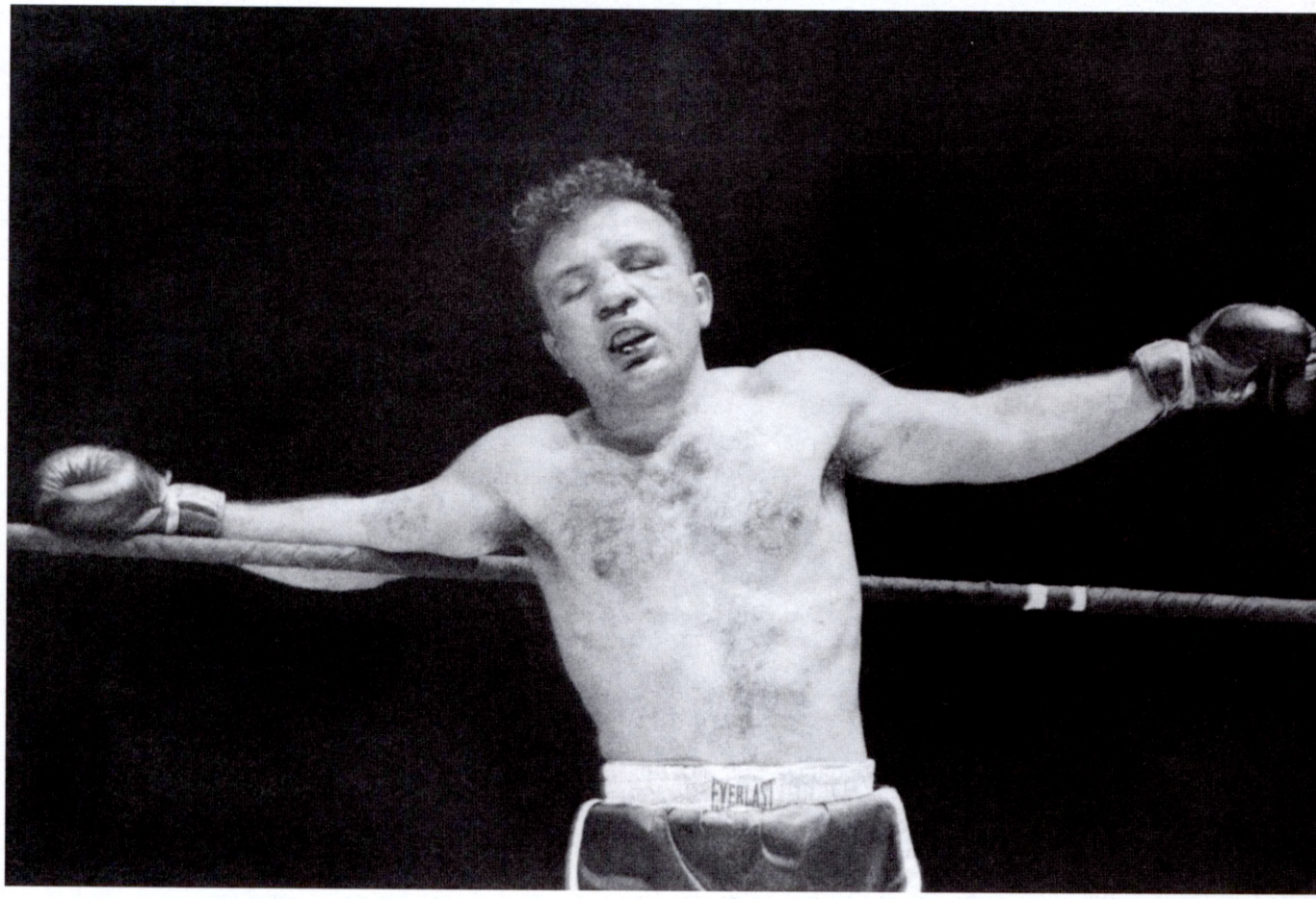
Jake, a great money fighter, found his master in Ray, who made it five out of six in their series. In their previous battles, Jake put on the pressure when the going was against him. On this occasion, the scientific work of Robbie took all the starch out of the champ and he couldn't come through.

Nor could Jake, as in many of his past bouts, play "possum." He didn't get the opportunity. Sugar Ray's left was too busy and too effective to have the defending titleholder think of trickery. He was too much engaged in trying to check the blows of his opponent. Jake didn't have to feign exhaustion. Robbie's pace took care of that.

Robbie's polished, rhythmic punching turned the trick, though he took many hard blows that checked his advance and slowed, and at times, jarred him. He had no picnic, though one wouldn't believe it watching the show on television or reading about the defeat of the Bronx Bull.

SO EFFECTIVE was Robbie's left that in one round I counted twenty-six safe shots in the first two minutes. He pelted Jake in every session. Only when he was hard pressed, especially in the third and 11th, was Ray forced to let up because of Jake's body attack, but he quickly regained his wind and then the bombardment continued. An

LaMotta kept coming, but when the attack faded, Robinson scored heavily and often.



UNDERWOOD ARCHIVES

Despite the savage punishment he absorbed, the great LaMotta refused to go down.

uninterrupted volley of lefts and rights to face and head dazed Jake.

The accuracy of Ray's delivery was reminiscent of Benny Leonard, Barney Ross, Packey McFarland and Mike Gibbons at their best. The tense gathering, Chicago's contribution to boxing's stride towards normalcy, paid enough dough to see a good fight and the fans weren't disappointed. It was one of the best battles in recent years and will take its place among the never-to-be-forgotten fights.

Jake never dreamt that he would be forced to take such a shellacking from the man whom he had dodged for many months since winning the crown from Marcel Cerdan.

There were times when Jake stood out as Ray's master, but not for long. I gave Jake only three rounds and called one even. My point score agreed with that of Judge Eddie Klein, 70 points to 50. The rounds which Jake won brought the fighters on even terms when the eighth got under way. After the ninth, it was Robbie all the way.

In only one session, the 11th, did it appear that Jake would down Ray. He had the Harlemite in a corner and flayed way with both fists. But most of the punches failed to land, and after Robbie had ducked out of the trap he cut loose on his own and took the round by a safe margin.

FROM then on, a disconsolate, tired, helpless Jake took severe punishment without meting out any.

In the twelfth round, LaMotta landed only nine blows, none of which was of any consequence. In the final frame, he connected only five times as against 56 jabs, hooks and uppercuts scored for his challenger.

Never had Jake been subjected to such severe punishment, and he admitted after the fight that Robbie had not only given him his toughest battle but had hurt him more than had any other opponent in his long career.

What Sugar Ray dished out in the final two frames was a reminder of the punishment Max Schmeling received at the hands of Joe Louis in their second fight.

Jake was staggered. He couldn't defend himself, because he could scarcely raise his arms. He must have realized in the 11th that his number was up.

LaMotta was slugged, flayed, jabbed and upper cut. He was slashed over the cheek bone. Blood flowed from his nose and mouth. His eyes were dimmed by constant pecking by Sugar Ray. The bridge of his nose was injured and he could scarcely stand erect. He was definitely out on his feet when the referee interceded.

Regardless of the shellacking LaMotta took, the fight was a thriller. Jake gave all he had while he could, and no one could find fault when he meekly submitted to the referee's decision. It was as it should have been. There was no use carrying on under the circumstances.

FIGHT
REPORT

MAXIM OUTCLASSED BUT HEAT FELLS ROBINSON

CLOSE TO SHUTOUT VICTORY, SUGAR RAY IS FORCED TO QUIT IN TITLE BOUT THROUGH EXHAUSTION

By **Nat Fleischer**

This fight report was originally published in the September 1952 issue of The Ring Magazine.

WHAT should have resulted in the greatest triumph of Ray Robinson's career was turned into a knockout defeat when, leading his opponent by the proverbial mile, he collapsed at the end of the 13th round and was unable to come up for the 14th in his light heavyweight title fight with Joey Maxim at Yankee Stadium. Sugar Ray had the light heavyweight crown all but clinched when the heat got him.

Robinson, entering the ring at 160 pounds against 173 for his opponent, boxed rings around his heavier rival. The few effective punches landed in an otherwise uninspired bout, in which the defending titleholder could not possibly have retained his title except by a knockout, were landed by Ray. He bossed the contest from start to the 13th round.

On my scorecard, Ray gained every round through the 11th, yet the record book will show that he was knocked out for the first time in his career, the KO being recorded in the 14th.

Up to the time of the collapse of the greatest all-around fighting machine in many years, the affair was too one-sided to give Maxim a chance. The first effective blows delivered by Joey didn't connect until the 12th when Ray began to show the effects of the powerful heat, 104 degrees at the ringside.

Yet, even in that round when Ray was wobbly and doing a Leon Errol about the ring, Maxim, wary of trickery, didn't take advantage of the situation.

Staggering in the 12th and almost helpless in the 13th, Ray was a mark for Maxim, yet Robinson finished the session but had to be helped to his corner, where he sat listlessly in a semi-conscious state, unable to move or talk.

It was the end for Robinson, but the fists of Maxim had not turned the trick.

"Physical exhaustion" the doctors called it, a state of collapse brought on by heat and humidity more than by the fists of Maxim, which didn't carry much weight in this fight between the middleweight king and the monarch of the next higher division.

ROBINSON was the victim of the terrific pace he had set to get his man early. Had he paced himself, as did his opponent, he might have continued to the end of the journey and equaled the record of Henry Armstrong and Bob Fitzsimmons, the only pugilists to win three world crowns.

Sitting at the ringside watching the commotion that followed the collapse of Sugar Ray, I was reminded of the fight I refereed at Carlin's Park in Baltimore in July 1940, a world featherweight championship match between Harry Jeffra and Spider Armstrong of Canada.

They fought in an arena in which the thermometer registered 102 degrees, yet these youngsters, under conditions very similar to those which prevailed in the Yankee Stadium bout, went the distance. Jeffra that night went into battle scaling 124½ pounds to 125 for his opponent and each lost seven pounds.

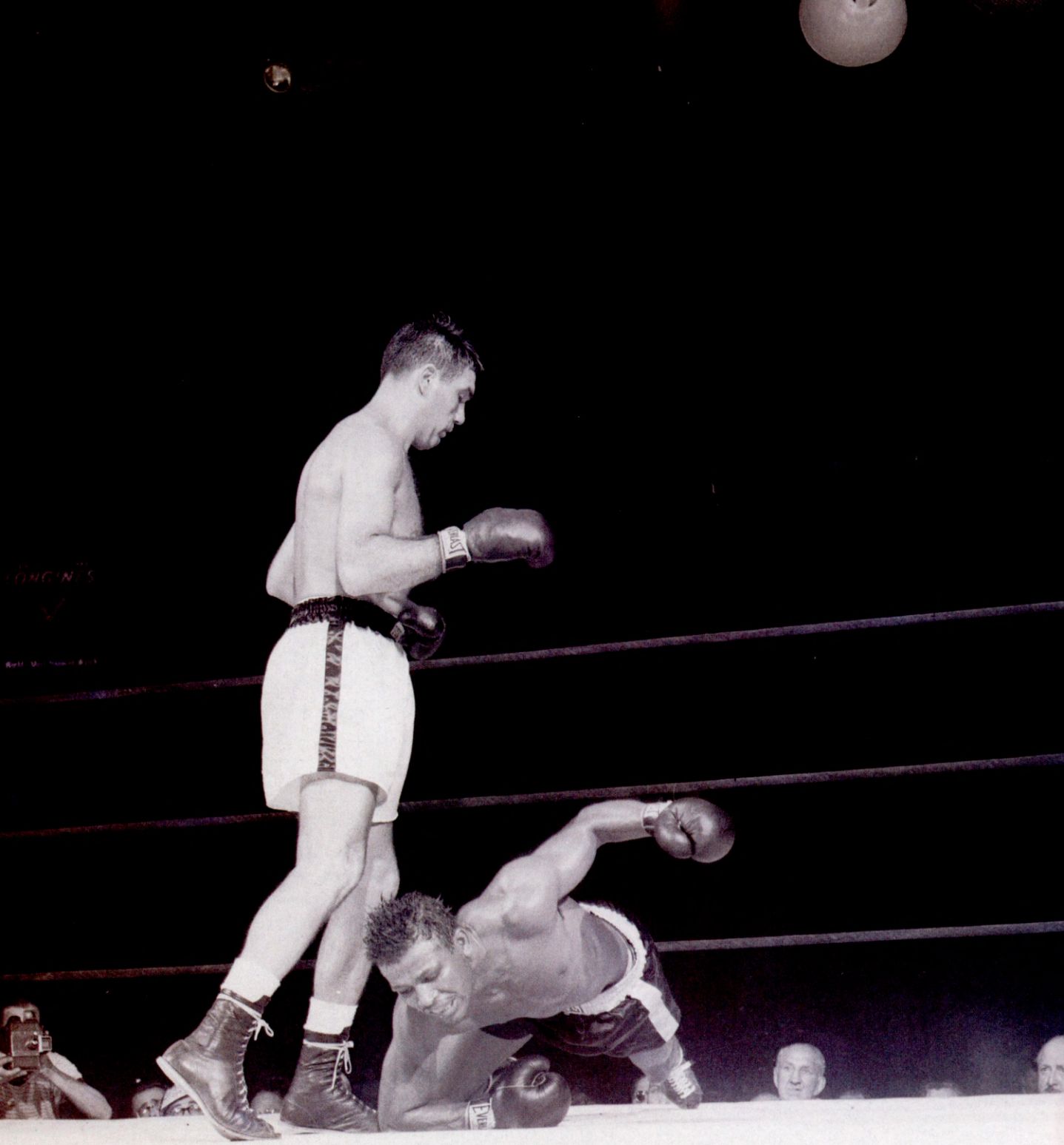
The Robinson-Maxim affair was fought in brutal heat. As the fight progressed, the contestants became weaker and weaker. Maxim gauged himself properly while Ray tried to beat the heat. His plan failed.

Maxim succeeded and he pulled the chestnuts out of the fire with victory that no one, not even his staunchest admirers, could have predicted when the 12th round ended. Even they were surprised.

It was a contest that lacked thrills. Like the second Louis-Conn fight, the ending furnished the most exciting

Robinson's superior skills and ring savvy had him on the cusp of a history-making triumph over Maxim.

BETTMANN



The searing heat and Maxim's size take their toll on Robinson, who begins to flounder.

part of the fracas. A tame battle, devoid of interest, was turned into a sensational fight, with episodes hitherto unlisted in world title fights.

I DIDN'T think that the disparity in weight and strength, which favored the defending champion, was the biggest factor in Robinson's defeat. It was the pace set by Sugar Ray. Had he set a more moderate pace, he would have succeeded in going the route and with his superb boxing would have reached the goal of his ambition. Of course this would have been contrary to the plans he had arranged. To offset the advantages which his rival had in physical make up, Ray and his advisory board agreed that speed in the early part of the fight would turn the trick for the challenger, but it was that speed that lessened the vitality of Robinson as the fight went on and eventually it caused his downfall.

Sugar Ray displayed still another fault – he held too often. That was no way to conserve energy when facing an opponent who was so much heavier and who was strong at the weight at which he defends his crown. I, among many others at the ringside, wondered how come that a fighter of Robinson's experience permitted himself to go to the point of exhaustion instead of

coasting or at least pacing himself, as did his heavier opponent.

The bout was another in the long list of ring history that shows the folly of having champions in two divisions facing each other in a bout in which the weight problem gives the titleholder in the higher division a distinct advantage. History tells the story of the downfall of many stars of pugilism in such contests.

Perhaps the time has arrived for the boxing moguls of our country and those abroad to place a ban on such bouts and to force the titleholder in each division to meet legitimate challengers in his own class. Discussing a return engagement between Robinson and Maxim after the uninspired type of milling in their recent contest while Archie Moore, for seven years top-ranking contender in Maxim's division, is unable to get a crack at the crown, is a travesty on the sport and points with scorn to those who continue to permit him to be shunted to the sidelines.

From the outset of the stadium affair, Robinson proved his superiority in all branches. As a boxer, he exemplified mastery such as was expected of so great a pugilist. It was not until the 11th round that he gave an indication of faltering, for up to then he had scored, in my book, a clean shutout. I figured that nothing could stop him from joining the ring immortals who had previously annexed three titles.

The change came after Ray in the 11th had rocked Maxim with a powerful right to the jaw, by far the best he had tossed in the fight. That punch carried TNT, but the effort Ray exerted in crashing it home apparently had taken its toll, for immediately after he began to show the signs of fatigue.

Through the next two rounds, though he connected with several effective wallops, he staggered and stumbled all over the ring. The sudden change took the spectators, especially the scribes, by surprise, so sudden did it come. Punches he had previously sent unerringly to the mark now were hitting the ozone. He was missing wildly, and those which did connect lacked the effectiveness of previous rounds.

Had Maxim exhibited any tough fighting qualities, had he a killing instinct, he could have knocked Ray out in the 12th or 13th round. If ever a fighter was given every advantage to turn the tide on a rival who had rolled up such a huge advantage, Ray had given that opportunity to Joey. Instead of taking advantage of those, Maxim faltered. He sagged into clinches, swung aimlessly, stepped forward and permitted Ray to rest against him when one solid punch could have put Robinson away.

THOUGH Jack Kearns and Maxim, explaining Joey's failure, declared that the strategy mapped out in pre-battle plans succeeded, one must remember that Maxim never was an aggressive fighter, and against Sugar Ray, plan or no plan, he didn't do any better, because he doesn't fight that way. He is a colorless, plodding fighter of the lightly jabbing, cuffing school, the uninteresting type.

In the 13th, Ray almost fell through the ropes while stepping back to avoid a swing, and shortly after, while attempting a sweeping right for the jaw, Robinson missed and fell flat on his face. When he got to his feet, Ray was a target for a knockout, yet Maxim, instead of going in for the kill, thought his opponent was putting across the old Leach Cross stunt and hesitated to take full advantage of the situation. Maxim did get one good hook into the body and two lefts to the head that staggered Ray, but neither carried the steam necessary to put away the weary challenger.

Then came the surprise of the fight. Here was Robinson staggering about the ring. Once, as already told, he almost went out of the ring while resting against the ropes where he had been driven while retreating. Yet he set himself and crashed a right to Maxim's jaw just before the bell sounded that was one of the hardest punches in the entire battle. And a few seconds later, he virtually was carried to his corner, where the fight ended.

The last punch of Ray's caused considerable comment. "How come he could pivot himself for such a hefty wallop seconds before his collapse?" Dr. Nardiello, Ray's personal physician, answered that with the statement that it was the dying effort of a man who found his strength rapidly ebbing. Robinson clung to the ropes in a neutral corner as the round ended, and his seconds leaped over the ropes to administer to him in his corner.

THUS ended a contest in which Robinson, the master technician, the greatest all-around fighter in several decades, had with dazzling speed, beautiful boxing, heavy hitting and quick, accurate timing, given a boxing lesson for 11 rounds to a man whose title he was eager to annex. He gained most of his advantage through the use of left hand jabs, hooks and right crosses delivered mostly from a crouching position. The most effective blows landed by Maxim were short punches to the midsection and sides when the men were in clinches. Ray was warned seven times in the first six rounds for repeated holding, but no penalty was given by referee Ruby Goldstein.

The unexpected ending was one of many surprises in the fight. For the first time in a championship fight, two referees were used. Goldstein, after working nine rounds, was unable to come out for the 10th. He was exhausted by the heat and had to be treated.

Ray Miller took his place and worked the last four rounds. He did a good job in forcing the men to break, something Goldstein had difficulty in doing, and it was the action of Miller that undoubtedly brought about the quick ending of the battle; for Robinson, unable to rest against his rival, was forced to retreat, thus using up the energy he tried to save.

The bout originally was scheduled for two days before it took place but had to be postponed due to rain. The fighters were reweighed and two scales were found faulty. A third one was passed.

BETTMANN

ROBINSON VS. THE MOB

By **Don Stradley**

ROBINSON'S STEADFAST RESISTANCE TO MAFIA INFLUENCE LIKELY PROLONGED HIS MARCH TO THE WELTERWEIGHT TITLE

(Above) Robinson after the New York State Athletic Commission suspended him for 30 days and slapped a $500 fine for his failure to report a $25,000 bribe offer.

BETTMANN

Al Nettlow didn't belong in a ring with Ray Robinson. By the time they met on December 14, 1942, at the Convention Hall in Philadelphia, Robinson was a sleek 21-year-old who was already being described as something special. Nettlow was more experienced at 27, but he'd lost four of his last six bouts and, as things turned out, would never fight again after this particular night. Nettlow absorbed Robinson's punches for three rounds before his manager, Al Weill, asked referee Matt Adgie to stop the massacre. "Nettlow melted into his corner," wrote the Philadelphia Inquirer, "sagged upon the stool, his nose oozing blood, his face badly swollen and his stamina entirely spent." In other words, he ended up like most of Robinson's opponents in those days.

The difference, however, was that Robinson had agreed beforehand to carry Nettlow and not knock him out. This was under the advisement of Frank "Blinky" Palermo, a noted figure in Philadelphia's underworld. Palermo suggested that Robinson should oblige, otherwise he would be unwelcome in Philadelphia. Robinson had reluctantly agreed, but one wouldn't know it by the newspapers of the time. As the Inquirer reported, Robinson gave Nettlow a "fearsome beating" from the opening bell. This was a funny way of carrying a guy.

Robinson mentioned the bout in his 1970 autobiography (*Sugar Ray*, co-

written by Dave Anderson), claiming he accidentally hit Nettlow with a counter and knocked him cold, but his memory of the fight contradicts the news accounts of the day. Regardless, if Robinson agreed to carry an opponent or two, and he said as much in his book, he was in good company. Skillful fighters often carried opponents in those days, usually if the bout was just a tune-up or a non-title affair. "I never considered it morally wrong," Robinson wrote. "As long as I was winning the fight, I saw no reason why I had to punish a lesser opponent." Apparently, he hadn't developed this credo at the time he fought Nettlow. To smooth things over with the mob, Robinson claimed to have visited Palermo after the bout to apologize. Palermo only shrugged and said, "Nothing we can do about it now."

This was hardly Robinson's only brush with boxing's sketchy side. In February of 1947, he testified before the New York State Athletic Commission about an offer he received from an unnamed stranger. The deal was for Robinson to make $25,000 by not making weight for a fight with reigning welterweight champion Marty Servo. The commission hit Robinson with a $500 fine for not reporting the incident immediately when it happened. It was probably not a mere coincidence that Al Weill, who had managed Nettlow and was known to pal around with shady types, was also Servo's manager.

Since the late 1920s, boxing had been largely swayed by a small but wily group of gangsters. During Robinson's time, this phenomenon reached fruition with the International Boxing Club, a powerful promotional consortium that bowed to the influence of Frankie Carbo, a fringe mobster who had at least two murders to his credit. Despite being a manager of fighters, the ubiquitous Al Weill happened to be the IBC's matchmaker. Carbo and Palermo liked to bully their way in on a fighter and buy his contract, and then step back while someone else played the role of manager for the public. There's no telling how many fighters were secretly under the control of Carbo and Palermo, or how many fights were affected by their tampering. In a landmark congressional hearing on the subject of racketeers involved with boxing, Jake LaMotta testified that he'd taken a dive against Billy Fox, a fighter managed by Palermo, in

Robinson is surrounded by fans prior to his testimony at a NYC D.A. inquiry into mob influence in boxing in 1947.

order to receive a title shot. LaMotta claimed this was the only way to make progress in his career. Such was the impact of Carbo and his ilk.

It has been alleged that the mob delayed Robinson's rise to the championship, and that gangsters convinced New York promoter Mike Jacobs to put Robinson on the back burner until he learned how to cooperate. If he couldn't even carry Nettlow when asked, how would Robinson respond to bigger requests? Robinson, conversely, usually put the blame for his slow rise solely on Jacobs.

Robinson was ready for a title shot fairly early in his career, but Jacobs stalled. Even as a young fighter without a title, Robinson was a hard negotiator. What would he be like, Jacobs wondered, once he became champion? Jacobs had other concerns. Though heavyweight champion Joe Louis was popular among white ticket buyers, Jacobs wasn't sure he could sell another dominating Black champion in Madison Square Garden. Customers had to believe the challenger had a fighting chance, but there was no one at 147 who could touch Robinson. Jacobs suggested Robinson could make more money by fighting around the country without a title belt. Robinson went along with this idea but was unhappy.

Jacobs was often praised for the way he handled gangsters, so whether he was influenced by them is open for discussion and varies depending on who tells the story. Robinson's supporters say, indeed, Jacobs was a rat bastard who sided with the mobsters, while Jacobs' supporters say he never genuflected to anybody, least of all the cheap hoods infiltrating his business. Regardless, Robinson didn't fight for the championship until his 76th bout. Jack Johnson, who competed 40 years earlier in an even more difficult time for African Americans, managed to earn a title shot in his 60th fight. It is no wonder then that Robinson was so mercenary during negotiations.

The notorious boxing-affiliated racketeer Frankie Carbo

It is so easy to discuss his greatness in the ring that we sometimes overlook what Robinson did on the outside, namely that he paved the way for all boxer-businessmen to come, and that his stubborn negotiations often led to periods where he was unpopular. Robinson had a way of deflecting the press in these matters. Just when journalists were ready to print a disparaging story on him for being greedy or delaying another fight, he'd show up at a charity event with a nice donation and made sure photographers were there to record his magnanimous gesture. Robinson was a master of image control. Still, Robinson occasionally fell out of favor with the public, such as after his discharge from the Army.

Like most young males of his era, Robinson endured a military hitch during World War II. Robinson was a difficult fit. He was a rebel, not used to taking orders, highlighted by an altercation with a racist MP at Camp Sibert in Alabama. A short time later, Robinson was honorably discharged. It had nothing to do with the MP, however.

The discharge stemmed from a weird incident where Robinson allegedly slipped in the barracks and knocked himself out. How the most graceful man in boxing could do such an oafish thing seemed unlikely, but he was soon under psychiatric care in Staten Island, claiming he had amnesia. Robinson spent days in a hospital bed, incoherent and unable to understand simple questions. He was even given sodium amytal, a "truth drug," to uncover what had actually happened, but to no avail. Robinson was sent home on June 3, 1944. He resumed his boxing career, but more than a few columnists were cold to him. There was much speculation that Robinson had faked the whole barracks incident in order to avoid going overseas for the war effort. For his next few fights, there were noticeable boos when Robinson entered the ring.

Robinson eventually won over the fans and became a major star, especially during the 1950s. Now that he was a bit beyond his prime and vulnerable, the general public was more fascinated by him than ever before. Of course, Robinson had more

pressing issues than the fickleness of patrons. Gangsters, for instance, still hovered around him.

In February of 1951, Robinson was training in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, for his shot at LaMotta's middleweight championship. Carbo called and boldly threw down an offer. Though Robinson and LaMotta had already fought five times by then, Carbo suggested they go thrice more. The first, Carbo proposed, would go to Robinson, while LaMotta would take the second. The third, once Carbo and his pals had made a killing on bets, could be legit. Robinson wasn't interested. "You've got the wrong guy," he said.

Carbo backed off and the fight went on with no mob interference. Robinson demolished LaMotta, left him half-dead on the ropes and won the middleweight title. If Al Nettlow was watching, he probably sent LaMotta a sympathy card.

Robinson was approached again in 1952. An unnamed Chicago crime boss offered Robinson a million dollars if he took a dive against Rocky Graziano. It was to be the same three-fight plan Carbo had proposed for Robinson and LaMotta. Robinson politely turned the Chicago man down but never reported the bribe to authorities. Robinson wrote that "it isn't my style to squeal on anybody," and that he considered this mobster a "pleasant acquaintance."

Robinson's autobiography gives the impression that he actually enjoyed mobsters. They were flashy guys who liked money, and he could certainly relate to them on that level. He portrayed himself as blissfully ignorant about their dirty work behind the scenes. "I knew about his reputation," Robinson wrote of Carbo, "but at the time I didn't know how really bad it was." Robinson's real contempt was for promoters, not gangsters. His disdain for promoters grew when he got involved with the International Boxing Club.

Robinson hadn't wanted to do business with the IBC. How else could it be explained that the most famous fighter of the decade fought so rarely in New York, where the IBC exacted its authority? During his heyday, Robinson fought in some decidedly obscure locations, from Scranton to New Haven, plus a couple of lengthy tours of Europe – any old spot where the IBC had no pull. By 1957, however, Robinson's growing financial troubles brought him directly into the IBC's massive web.

IBC president Jim Norris, a spoiled millionaire in league with Carbo, was the main source of Robinson's scorn. Robinson's bouts often fell through or were delayed because of some contractual snafu, usually involving his percentage of the gate, or an argument with Norris over the television money or closed-circuit sales. Inadvertently, Robinson's dislike of Norris helped lead to the Supreme Court dissolving the IBC's power in 1959. Robinson's contribution was an impassioned speech he gave to the NYSAC where he chastised Norris for monopolizing the business. What some construed as more of Robinson's bellyaching about money turned out to be an important factor in breaking up the IBC and cleaning up the sport. It also cemented Robinson's reputation as a guy who

IBC president Jim Norris and Robinson put their feud aside during this Ring middleweight title presentation in 1956.

told the mob to go to hell.

How did Robinson keep gangsters at bay? Was he, as many like to believe, simply above their reach?

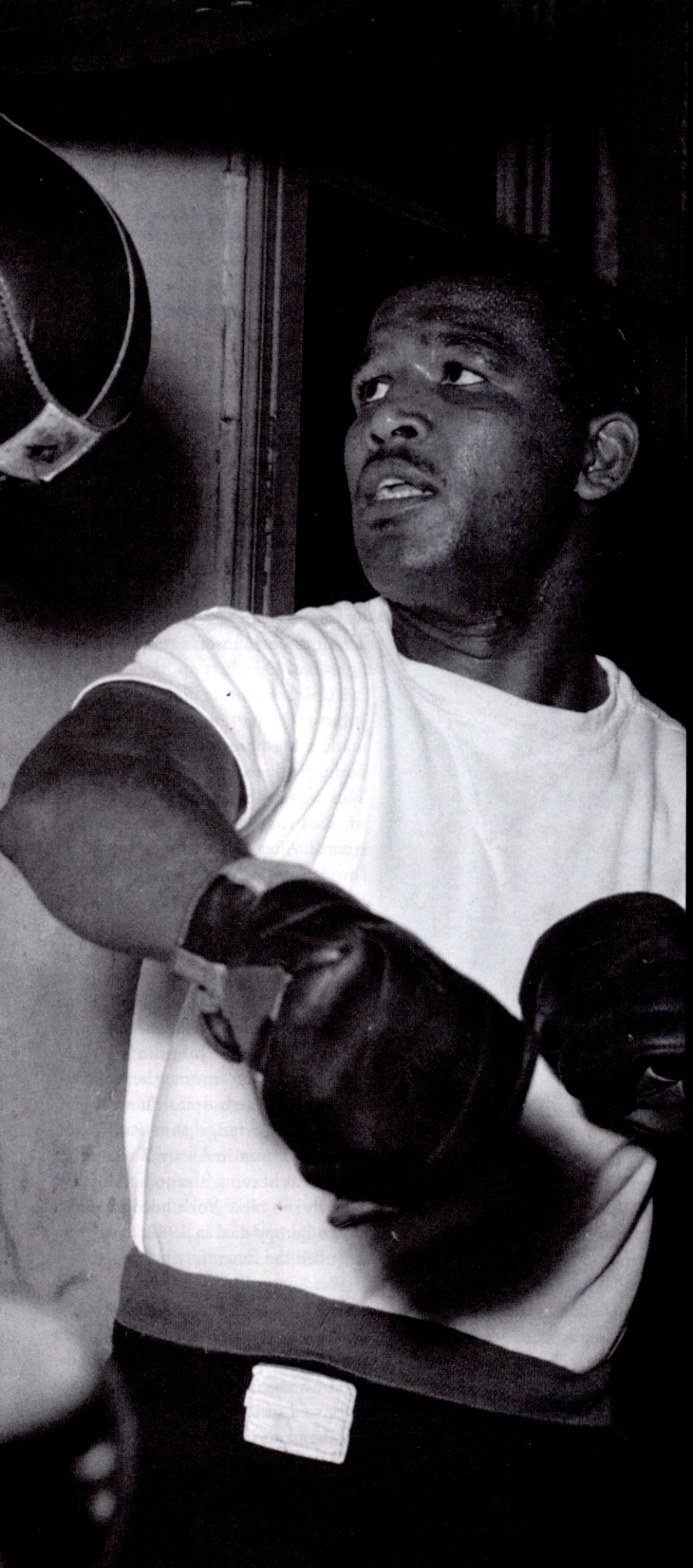
One possible factor was that Robinson had his share of dangerous friends, including a major drug trafficker named Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson, aka "The Harlem Godfather."

Biographers have differed when it came to Robinson's link to Johnson. Some say the two men were merely acquaintances. Others, such as Robinson's first wife, said Robinson and Johnson shared a deep bond. In Pound for Pound, a 2005 biography of Robinson by Herb Boyd and Ray Robinson II, Johnson was described as someone who spent a lot of money in Ray's various Harlem establishments. Ray II claimed his father's collection of friends included "underworld types like Bumpy Johnson."

It has also been said that Robinson's trainer George Gainford liked having Johnson around as insurance in case certain mobsters showed up to bother his fighter. New York journalist Jimmy Breslin once told Robinson biographer Wil Haygood that the sight of Johnson was enough to send "Carbo and that gang" scattering. As good as that story sounds, it's unlikely that Johnson had nothing better to do than hang around in a gym doorway looking scary. He was also incarcerated for a large chunk of Robinson's career. Yet, Johnson's clout was undeniable. He was the rare African American crook with connections to some high-ranking Italian mobsters. If Carbo and Palermo were ever in the same room with Johnson, they knew he was someone to fear. Compared to the activities on Johnson's resume, fixing fights was kid stuff.

Robinson made no mention of Johnson in his autobiography and made a big point of saying he knew nothing of heroin or "dope pushers." This was probably another instance of Robinson practicing image control. After all, he'd just established the Sugar Ray Robinson Youth Foundation, and to be associated with such a man as Johnson could hurt him. Meanwhile, Johnson's wife, Mayme, published a memoir in 2008 and described Robinson and her husband as dear friends. When a rival shot Johnson in 1952, Robinson was among the first to visit him in the hospital. It was also general knowledge that Robinson visited Johnson in Alcatraz when the latter was serving a sentence for his part in the New York heroin trade. When Bumpy died in 1968, Robinson attended the funeral.

Was Bumpy Johnson the real reason Robinson avoided mob trouble? Or was Robinson simply one of the few untouchables in boxing? It's difficult to know the truth. As Carmen Basilio once said of Robinson, "He wouldn't tell the truth to God." All we know is that Robinson had 201 professional bouts during boxing's most corrupt era. He probably benefited from having friends in low places.



TRY, TRY, TRY, TRY AGAIN

A REMARKABLE LEGACY ALREADY FIRMLY IN PLACE, **ROBINSON** TOOK A BRIEF STAB AT SHOWBIZ, BUT THE ALLURE OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP BELT PROVED TOO STRONG

By **Lee Groves**

For all world-class athletes, the ideal ending would be to gracefully leave the competitive arena at the absolute zenith, doing so with a healthy bank account, peace of mind and with a potentially lucrative second career in mind, if not in hand.

By announcing his retirement in December 1952, Sugar Ray Robinson, already considered the greatest pound-for-pound boxer in history as well as the most perfectly built pugilistic machine ever assembled, sought to execute the perfect exit strategy. At 31, Robinson was nearing the end of his chronological prime, and with a record of 132-3-2 with one no-contest and 87 knockouts, he was leaving behind a lifetime's worth of memories for fans to savor. His post-career blueprint seemed sound; his Harlem-based businesses would provide him enough income to allow him to pursue his dream of being a song-and-dance man. By stepping away from boxing and time-stepping into the spotlight of show business, he hoped to embody the quote credited to P.T. Barnum: "Always leave them wanting more."

The King of Harlem shows off in the lead-up to his 1955 comeback.

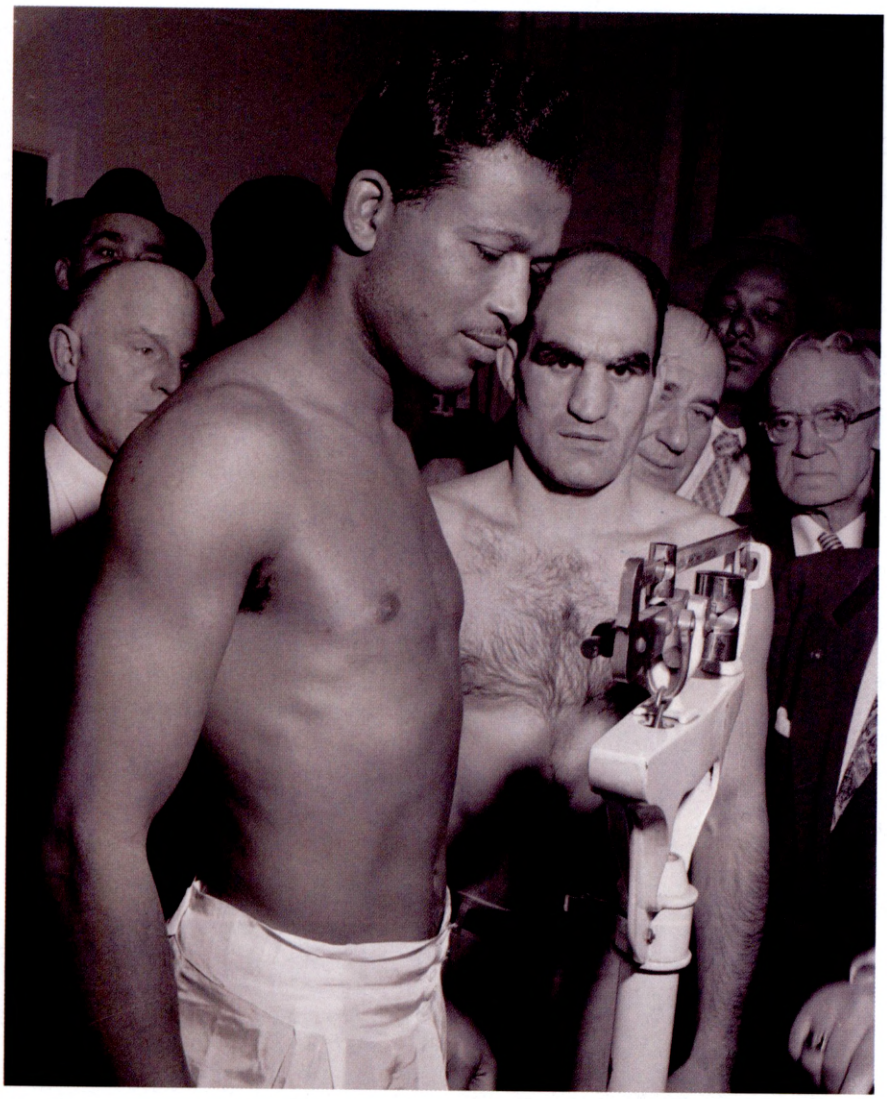
Without an opponent in front of him, Sugar Ray's footwork failed to dazzle.

Cosmetically, Robinson was up to the task, as he looked elegant in his white tie and tails. But after the initial rush of curiosity, it became clear that Ray Robinson the entertainer couldn't match the matchless bar set by Sugar Ray Robinson the boxer. He was a decent tap dancer, but he was no Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. He could tell jokes, but he was no Bob Hope, Jack Benny or Milton Berle. And while his singing voice could ultimately be compared with those of Joe Frazier, Muhammad Ali and Larry Holmes, he wasn't in the same universe as those who stood atop Mount Olympus in their various genres.

Robinson was honest enough with himself to realize he couldn't achieve the perfection he wanted, and the harsh reviews took their toll on the gate as well as on his reputation. Robinson couldn't stomach being mediocre, and rumors of a ring return were ignited when manager George Gainford was spotted with Robinson in Paris. Those rumors were further stoked by reports that his businesses were hemorrhaging money. It became clear that the income from his current gig couldn't begin to repay his debts. A triumphant boxing comeback, however, could.

Another persuasive argument was that Carl "Bobo" Olson – whom Robinson had already beaten twice – was now middleweight champion, thanks to his victory over Randy Turpin in October 1953. Olson had

RINGTV.COM



Following a 30-month layoff, Robinson was back against Joe Rindone.

won 18 straight since losing his second fight on points to Robinson in March 1952, including an 11th-round TKO over Pierre Langlois in December 1954 to retain his championship for the third time. Yes, Olson was on the best roll of his career – his other title-fight victims were the respected Rocky Castellani and welterweight king Kid Gavilan – but Robinson believed he could still take out Olson and regain the crown. All he had to do was win enough fights to justify the match, and if Robinson had his way, he would secure the showdown as soon as possible.

The comeback began January 5, 1955, at Detroit's Olympia Stadium against Joe Rindone, a Marine from Roxbury, Massachusetts, who was once rated seventh in the world. Robinson had stopped Rindone in six rounds in October 1950, and while he repeated that result here, the two-and-a-half years of rust was evident.

"For 10 exciting seconds, it was the Sugar Ray Robinson of old – swift, sharp and deadly," wrote the Associated Press of the knockout sequence. "But before that, the sleek New Yorker was cautious and uncertain, showing obvious signs of his 30-month layoff."

Two weeks later, Robinson appeared in his first nationally televised comeback bout against the rugged Ralph "Tiger" Jones, one of the era's most popular "TV fighters." Robinson was an 8-to-1 favorite against Jones, whose five-fight skid lowered his ledger to 32-12-3 with eight KOs. Once the opening bell sounded, however, the 26-year-old Jones unleashed the "Tiger" within and mauled the 33-year-old legend for 10 straight rounds. Shaken in the first, cut over the right eyebrow in the second and visibly tired after the fifth, Robinson lacked the strength, power and timing to cope with Jones' attack. Jones earned an overwhelming points victory and, recalling Robinson's heat-marred 14th-round TKO loss to Joey Maxim that ended the first phase of his career, the once-peerless Robinson had now lost two of his last three fights. In the very Chicago Stadium ring in which he dished out one of history's most vicious beatings against Jake LaMotta, Jones inflicted what the Associated Press called "the worst beating of (Robinson's) career."

The loss scuttled a proposed third fight between Robinson and Gavilan as well as his hoped-for match with Olson. Meanwhile, the win earned Jones his own date with Olson, albeit a non-title 10-rounder, 30 days later. The fact that Olson fired a near-shutout against Jones (100-78, 100-86, 99-87) graphically illustrated just how far Robinson was from his ultimate goal.

"I want to continue," Robinson told the AP. "I think Jones was too tough an opponent for a second fight. But being egotistical I wanted to take him on even though Joe Glaser (Robinson's business manager) was against it from the start. I think I can do better with a few more fights, and if I can't, then I'll quit."

Robinson returned two months later against Johnny Lombardo, whose record (32-12-2) was almost identical to Jones' but was only a 2-to-1 underdog, a measure of how far Robinson's regard had slipped. Another gauge was that the only people who saw the bout were the 5,124 inside the Cincinnati Gardens because it was not televised. Again Robinson struggled with his timing, but he showed enough flashes of his best self to win a 10-round *split* decision.

Robinson stuck with it, and, 16 days later, the sequence that ended his Milwaukee match against Ted Olla

in Round 3 was an encouraging sign that Robinson's previous speed and savvy were reawakening. Eighteen days after that in Detroit, Robinson survived a brief scare in Round 1 to comprehensively outpoint Garth Panter (100-77 twice, 99-81).

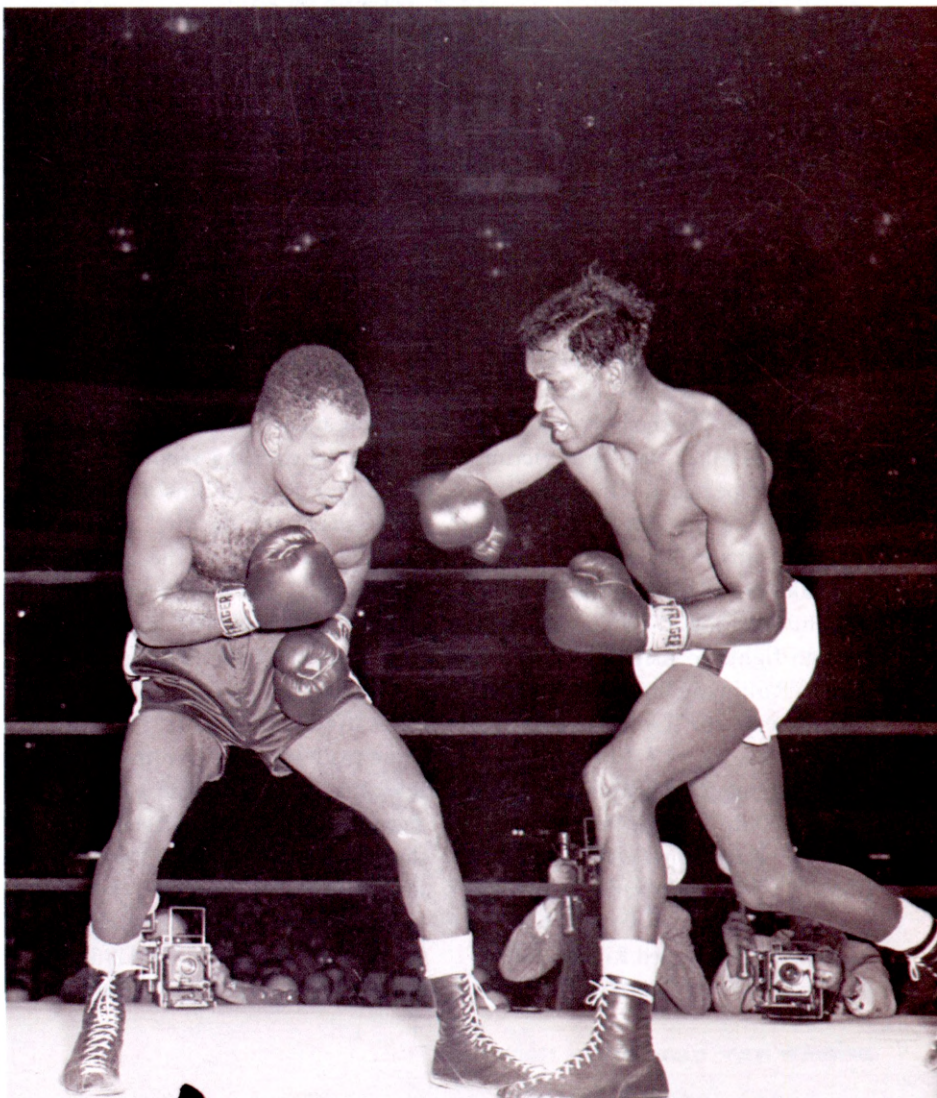
It was here that Robinson opted to roll the dice and see if he still had what it took to beat the top middleweights. The target was Castellani, who lost on points to champion Olson 11 months earlier but remained the top-rated challenger, thanks to subsequent wins over Moses Ward (TKO 8), Holly Mims (UD 12) and Chico Varona (UD 10). Castellani was a 2-to-1 choice, but Robinson forged an early lead by initiating most of the exchanges, showing sufficient strength in the clinches and focusing his attack on the body. But early in Round 6, Castellani maneuvered Robinson toward the ropes and connected with a crushing hook to the jaw that landed just as Robinson launched his own hook. The dazed Robinson fell forward to the canvas but regained enough of his faculties to rise at Jack Downey's count of nine. Robinson rode out the round with several well-timed clinches, then rocked Rocky with a whistling right in Round 8 and controlled the ninth with several pinpoint power shots. The decision was split; Jack Silver's 56-54 card for Castellani was heartily booed by the crowd inside San Francisco's Cow Palace, but Silver was overruled by judge Frankie Carter and referee Downey, both of whom saw Robinson a 56-54 victor.

The Castellani victory capped a remarkable reversal of fortune; in a little more than six months, Robinson had risen from the ashes of the Jones loss and became the leading challenger for Olson's championship.

Despite his two previous defeats to Robinson, Olson was a 3-to-1 favorite because (1) at 27, Olson was at his physical peak; (2) despite the Castellani victory, the skeptics doubted whether Robinson had the legs to last 15 rounds; and (3) when fighting near his own weight class, Olson was dominant. He barely lost a round in scoring 10-round decisions over "Tiger" Jones, Willie Vaughn and former light heavyweight champion Joey Maxim, the latter of which prompted Olson to challenge 175-pound king Archie Moore. "Ancient Archie," still near his best at 41, dismissed Olson (who scaled a then career-high 170¼) in three rounds, but subsequent points wins over Jimmy Martinez and Joey Giambra, where he scaled 165 and 166 respectively, helped steady his ship. Meanwhile, Robinson was hit with a pair of distractions shortly before the December 1955 bout at Chicago Stadium: the gangland slaying of former business associate Alex Louis Greenberg (he and Joe Louis had the distributing rights for Greenberg's Canadian Ace Brewing Co.) and an $87,000 federal tax lien on his earnings.

The first round saw Olson pressing the action, but, unlike all of his other comeback bouts, Robinson appeared relaxed, confident and razor-sharp. His legs had spring, his reflexes were on point and he produced accurate counters immediately after avoiding Olson's offerings. Robinson earned 10-9 scores from judges John Bray and Ed Hintz, but referee Frank Sikora scored it even.

Round 1's pattern continued until the waning moments of the second. As Olson moved in, Robinson landed a piercing left uppercut that caused the champion to pause. Seeing Olson was buzzed, Robinson missed with an overhand right, then landed a sweeping hook, a chopping right and



Sugar Ray Robinson glances a blow off the shoulder of Ralph (Tiger) Jones in the 2nd stanza of their 10 round middleweight bout at Chicago Stadium.

Middleweight champion for a second time, at the expense of Bobo Olson.

a final left uppercut that caused Olson to topple backward. Olson managed to scramble to his feet, but only after Sikora finished his 10-count. At 2:51 of Round 2, Robinson had become the first man to win the middleweight championship three times.

"It seems like almost a miracle," the joyous Robinson declared. "I'm a Christian. I did the very best I could and left the rest to God."

Five months later at Los Angeles' Wrigley Field, Robinson completed his four-fight sweep over Olson by scoring a fourth-round KO. Just like in fight three, the time of the stoppage was 2:51.

Following a non-title 10-round decision over Bob Provizzi in November 1956, Robinson faced Gene Fullmer, the barrel-chested son of a copper miner from West Jordan, Utah, who , at 25, was nearly a decade younger. Though named for the stylish Gene Tunney, Fullmer, a pleasant, gentle man outside the ring, was a crude, stone-faced brute with an iron chin and endless stamina inside it. He had many of the ingredients Turpin, "Tiger" Jones and LaMotta used to defeat Robinson, but Robinson looked so good in destroying Olson in back-to-back title fights that he still was a 6-to-5 pick.

Robinson's first appearance inside Madison Square Garden since his 62-second starching of Flashy Sebastian in August 1947 was grueling, punishing and messy – just the way Fullmer liked it. Fullmer absorbed Robinson's thunder with aplomb, he manhandled the champion in the clinches, and it was he who scored the fight's only knockdown in Round 7. The decision for Fullmer was unanimous, and it wasn't close (10-5, 9-6 and 8-5-2 in rounds).

Just as Olson secured an immediate rematch upon losing his title to Robinson, Robinson got the instant second chance at Fullmer on May 1, 1957 – two days before his 36th birthday. A good omen for Robinson was that the fight was staged at Chicago Stadium, the site of his title-winning triumphs against LaMotta and Olson as well as his three-round starching of Rocky Graziano. The smart money, however, was behind Fullmer, the 7-to-2 favorite. Complaints about Fullmer's rabbit punching and Robinson's holding prompted the Illinois Athletic Commission to inform both fighters that fouls wouldn't be tolerated, and thus the first four rounds assumed a wait-and-see pattern peppered by occasional but brief skirmishes. All three judges had Fullmer ahead 19-18 under the five-point must system.

Then came Round 5 – and the blow that came to be known as "The Perfect Punch."

In a scene that appeared much like the final moments of the third Olson bout, Fullmer walked toward Robinson with his right hand positioned slightly lower than it should have been. Seeing this, Robinson uncorked a beautifully timed 45-degree hook to the point of the chin that caused Fullmer's

tree-trunk legs to collapse. Fullmer's mind desperately wanted his body to rise, but he was counted out because it refused to comply.

"Never seen the punch coming," Fullmer told author Thomas Hauser years later. "I don't know anything about the punch except I've watched it on movies a number of times. The first thing I knew, I was standing up. Robinson was in the other corner. I thought he was in great condition, doing exercises between rounds. My manager crawled in the ring. I said, 'What happened?' He said, 'They counted 10.'"

The first man ever to win the middleweight title three times now was the first to win it four times.

Robinson defeats Carmen Basilio for his fifth middleweight title.

Seated at ringside was Robinson's next opponent, undisputed welterweight champion Carmen Basilio. The onion farmer from Canastota, New York, initially was a Robinson admirer, but that changed when he introduced himself to Robinson only to be brushed off. That act ignited a hatred that not only fueled Basilio for their September 1957 clash at Yankee Stadium, but for the remainder of his life.

The 5-foot-6½-inch Basilio – a surprising 6-to-5 favorite – overcame his pronounced height, reach and weight disadvantages the only way he could: by getting inside Robinson's longer arms and ceaselessly pounding every available target. Robinson's slashing blows cut Basilio's left eye in the fourth, but the challenger/champion fought through the blood, shrugged off Sugar Ray's torpedoes and withstood a spirited late-round rally to capture a well-received split decision that was later deemed The Ring's Fight of the Year. With the win, Basilio joined Robinson as the only reigning welterweight champions to dethrone a defending middleweight king.

The quality of their first meeting justified an immediate rematch in March 1958 at Chicago Stadium, Robinson's "lucky" building and the site at which Basilio had gone 0-3, including a scandalous points loss to Johnny Saxton that ended his first welterweight reign. As good as Fight One was, Fight Two was even better as they produced a scintillating spectacle while also fighting through tremendous physical challenges – a high fever for Robinson and a hideously swollen left eye for the 2-to-1 pick Basilio, the result of a Robinson uppercut late in Round 5.

"I got stupid that night," Basilio told author Peter Heller. "He kept throwing a right uppercut at me that night. He knew that I bobbed and weaved, and he tried to catch me going down. He'd throw it, I'd go down, I'd catch his right uppercut with my right hand, and I'd counter him with a left hook because he was wide open for it. I did it four times. The fifth time he threw it at me and I saw it coming. I missed it with my hand, and it hit me right in the eyebrow and broke the blood vessels."

Basilio continued to fight savagely despite the severe handicap, but Robinson was more than equal to the task as he twice staggered Basilio in the 14th and stunned him in the final round with shots to the injured orb.

"Trying to stop him was like trying to stop a freight train," Robinson told reporters later. "I feel like 10 guys jumped me."

Once again, the decision was split. But this time Robinson was the victor, the first fighter ever to win the same championship on five occasions. And, like Basilio-Robinson I, Robinson-Basilio II was The Ring's Fight of the Year.

Visions of a third meeting with Basilio, as well as a fantasy fight against light heavyweight monarch Moore, danced inside many heads, but those dreams remained dreams because financial terms couldn't be reached. Thus, Robinson was out of the ring for nearly 21 months and the National Boxing Association – the forerunner of today's WBA – stripped Robinson of its title for inactivity and awarded the belt to Fullmer, thanks to his 14th-round TKO over Basilio in August 1959. After stopping New England light heavyweight champion Bob Young in two rounds at the Boston Garden,

Robinson returned there in January 1960 to face Paul Pender, a Korean War veteran who retired in 1956 due to chronic hand injuries. After a stint with the Brookline Fire Department, Pender returned to the ring after 23 months away and won nine straight to earn a No. 10 rating and a shot at Robinson. The 5-to-1 underdog's sharp boxing and superior speed was good enough in the eyes of two judges to become the new champion in the eyes of Massachusetts, New York and The Ring.

Robinson exercised the rematch clause and, after a first-round KO of Tony Baldini in April, met Pender less than five months later, again at the Boston Garden. And, once again, Pender won a split decision that was much better received than the first, thanks to his taking command in the middle rounds with superior infighting.

"I wasn't rusty," Robinson said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I just didn't have what it takes to win. I tried to finish strong. But the judges made the decision; I didn't."

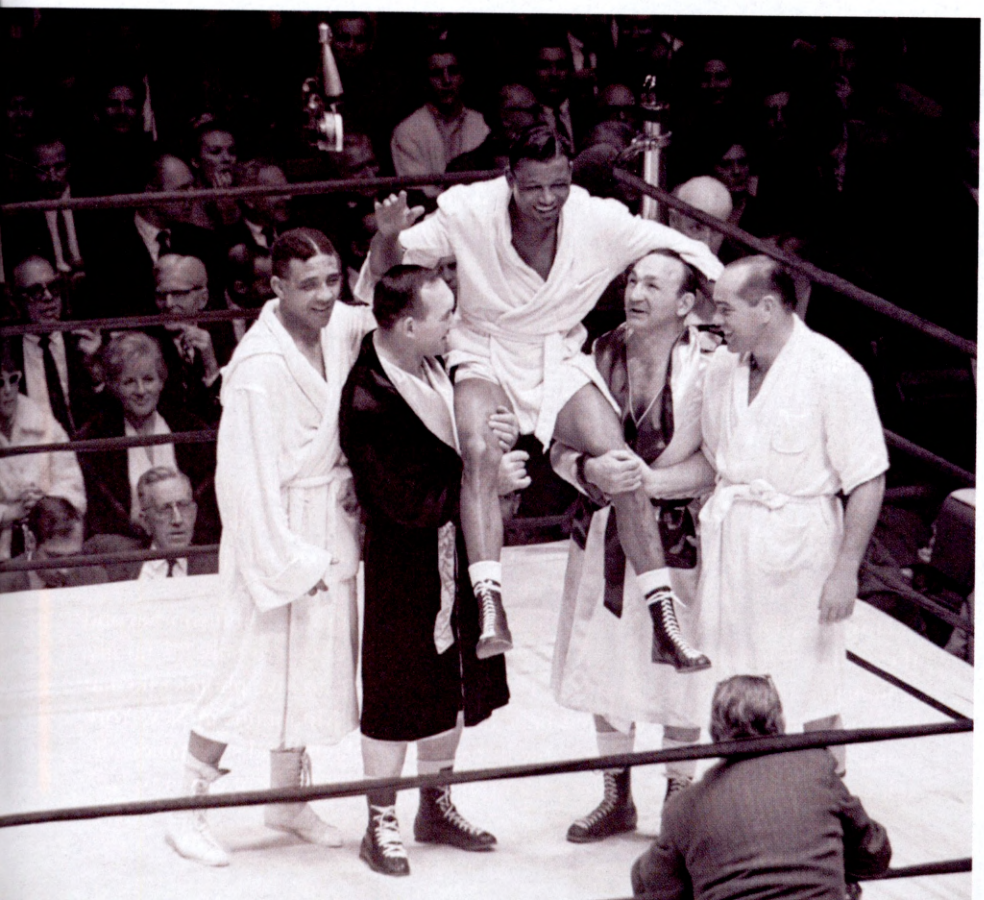
By now, Robinson was a pale shadow of the master who dominated the 1940s and early 1950s. His trigger was slower, his legs were heavier and his reflexes were duller, and yet he appeared to extract one final miracle when he met Fullmer in December 1960 at Los Angeles' Sports Arena. His middle-rounds surge combined with a huge 11th-round rally prompted many to believe he had done enough to earn a sixth middleweight title reign. A poll of 23 ringside reporters saw Robinson ahead 14-6-3, and referee Tommy Hart agreed by submitting an 11-4 card in his favor. But judge Lee Grossman's 9-5 score for Fullmer negated Hart while judge George Latka's 8-8 card led to a title-retaining draw for Fullmer.

The furor justified a fourth Fullmer-Robinson match, but while the 40-year-old icon performed well, the 30-year-old champ fought better as he nearly stopped Robinson in the third and hustled his way to a decisive, if somewhat uncomfortable victory.

Robinson fought on for four and a half years, winning most but losing often enough to keep him away from the title picture. He had enough in the tank to beat future junior middleweight champions Denny Moyer and Ralph Dupas but not enough to vanquish Terry Downes, Joey Giardello, Stan Harrington (twice), Mick Leahy and Memo Ayon. And yet, a 44-year-old Robinson was only one victory away from a final chance at glory, for the winner of his November 1965 contest against No. 1 contender Joey Archer was promised a fight with middleweight champion Dick Tiger.

Though Robinson boxed well in the early rounds, the relatively light-hitting Archer delivered a hard reality check in the fourth after a long, chopping right to the jaw floored Robinson for a nine-count. Archer nearly added a second knockdown in the sixth, seventh and 10th en route to a decisive points victory that dropped Robinson's record to 174-19-6 with two no-contests and 109 knockouts. Robinson announced his retirement the following day.

Three weeks later, Robinson was given a grand send-off at Madison Square Garden. He was joined by Fullmer, Basilio, Olson and Turpin, and as they posed for photographers, they were showered with cheers. It was the storybook end to what had been a magnificent quarter-century of excellence. RING



BETTMANN

(Left to right) Turpin, Fullmer, Basilio and Olson hold Sugar Ray aloft.

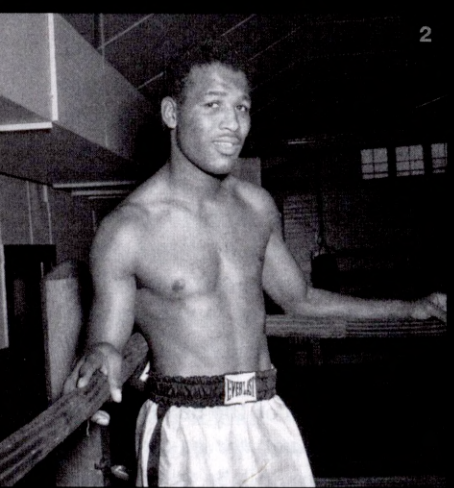
Lee Groves is a boxing writer and historian based in Friendly, West Virginia. He is a full member of the BWAA, from which he has won 19 writing awards, including two first-place awards, since 2011. He has been an elector for the International Boxing Hall of Fame since 2001 and is also a writer, researcher and punch-counter for CompuBox, Inc. He is the author of Tales from the Vault: A Celebration of 100 Boxing Closet Classics *and the co-author of* Muhammad Ali: By the Numbers.

THROUGH THE LENS

1

A CANDID LOOK AT THE QUIETER SIDE OF SUGAR RAY ROBINSON'S CAREER

By **Doug Fischer**



2

Sugar Ray Robinson was a bona fide attraction long before he won his first world championship. He attracted large crowds to his fights with an intoxicating blend of skill and power, and literally stopped traffic on the busy streets of New York City whenever he and his entourage were spotted in public.

Robinson possessed once-in-a-lifetime athletic talent, as well as charm, a gift for gab and a flair for fashion – he was poetry in motion in the ring and a stylish celebrity outside of it. So, it comes as no surprise that he was a magnet for photographers, and he loved the attention they lavished upon him.

Some of the most iconic photos ever snapped from ringside feature a fierce-looking Robinson landing dynamite punches to the chins of Kid Gavilan, Jake LaMotta and Gene Fullmer. Away from boxing, publicity photos of a dapper-dressed Robinson accepting an award at a charity event or drawing onlookers while chilling in front of his famous flamingo-pink Cadillac Eldorado outside of his club, "Sugar Ray's," graced the pages of general-interest magazines of the 1940s and '50s, such as Life, Look, Ebony and Jet.

However, The Ring's photographers sometimes followed Robinson beyond the arenas, fundraisers and Harlem nightspots to places where only his family, teammates and peers were allowed. The following Ring archive photos taken at various camps – from Greenwood Lake to the Catskill Mountains in New York – and in his office in Harlem show the introspective, playful and sometimes silly sides of the great champion, who seldom shunned the presence of cameras.

3

1. As a boy in Detroit, Robinson idolized Joe Louis and used to carry the future heavyweight champ's equipment to the Brewster Center gym. It must have given him great satisfaction to later become close friends with Louis, who often offered career advice.

2. The hard work that made Robinson an all-time great was done in solitude. No entourage was needed in the gym.

3. Robinson is widely regarded as the greatest boxer of all time. His trainers, Harry Wiley (left) and George Gainford (right), deserve more credit for their roles in his amazing career.

4. Robinson gets a little extra exercise in with some snow shoveling during a winter camp.

5. Robinson is attended to by trainer Harry Wiley during a workout.

4

5

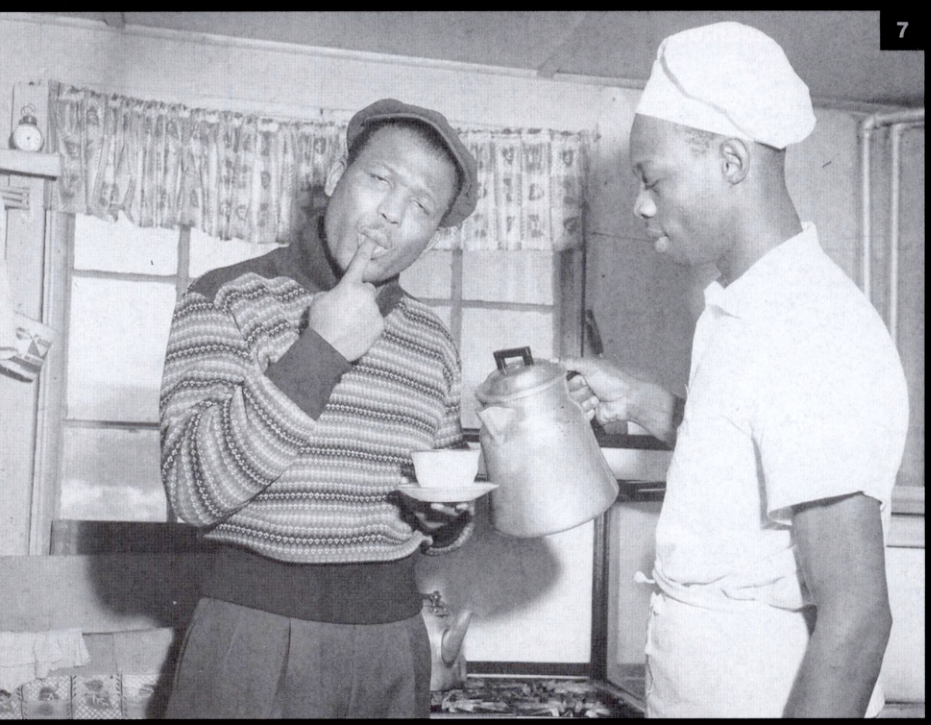
6

6. Robinson was so used to being in front of the camera that he probably wasn't half bad behind it as he snapped shots of the great Barney Ross.

7. How does Robinson take his coffee? With lots of sugar, of course!

8. Robinson takes a quiet outdoor moment for himself during camp.

7



8

9

9. Greatness recognizes greatness as former champ Barney Ross inspects the fist of one of his successors to the welterweight throne.

10. Robinson takes a playful punch from his sister Evelyn.

11. Robinson was just as serious about the business side of his career and his various non-boxing ventures as he was about his fight preparation.

10

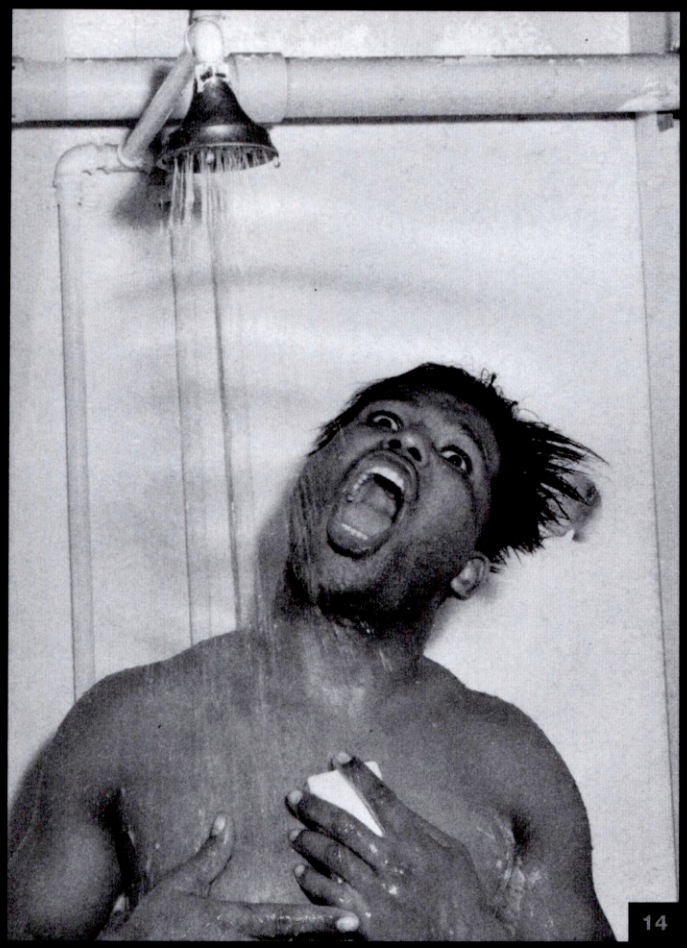
11

12

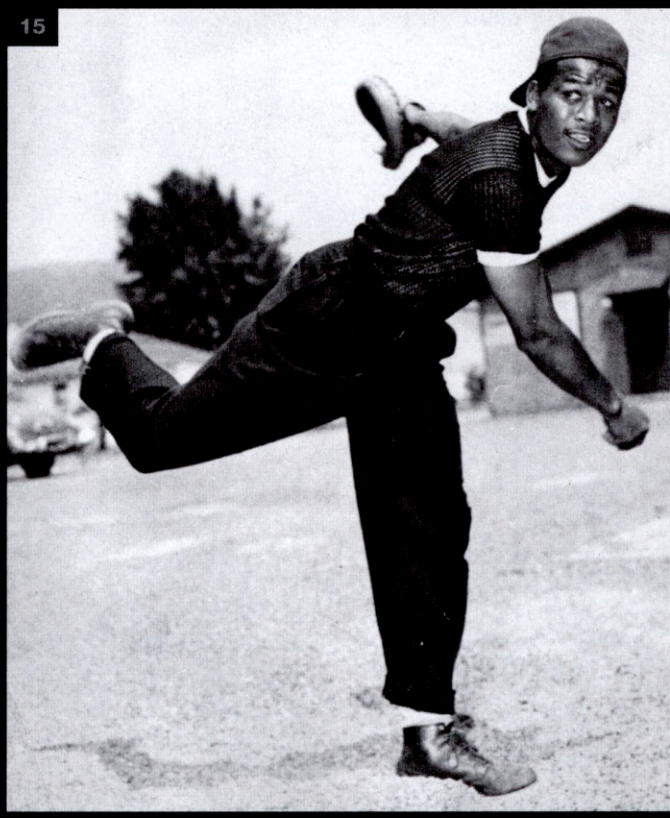
13

12. Robinson receives a kiss from his mother, Leila Hurst, between rounds of a sparring session.

13. Robinson receives advice from his mother during a gym session.



14



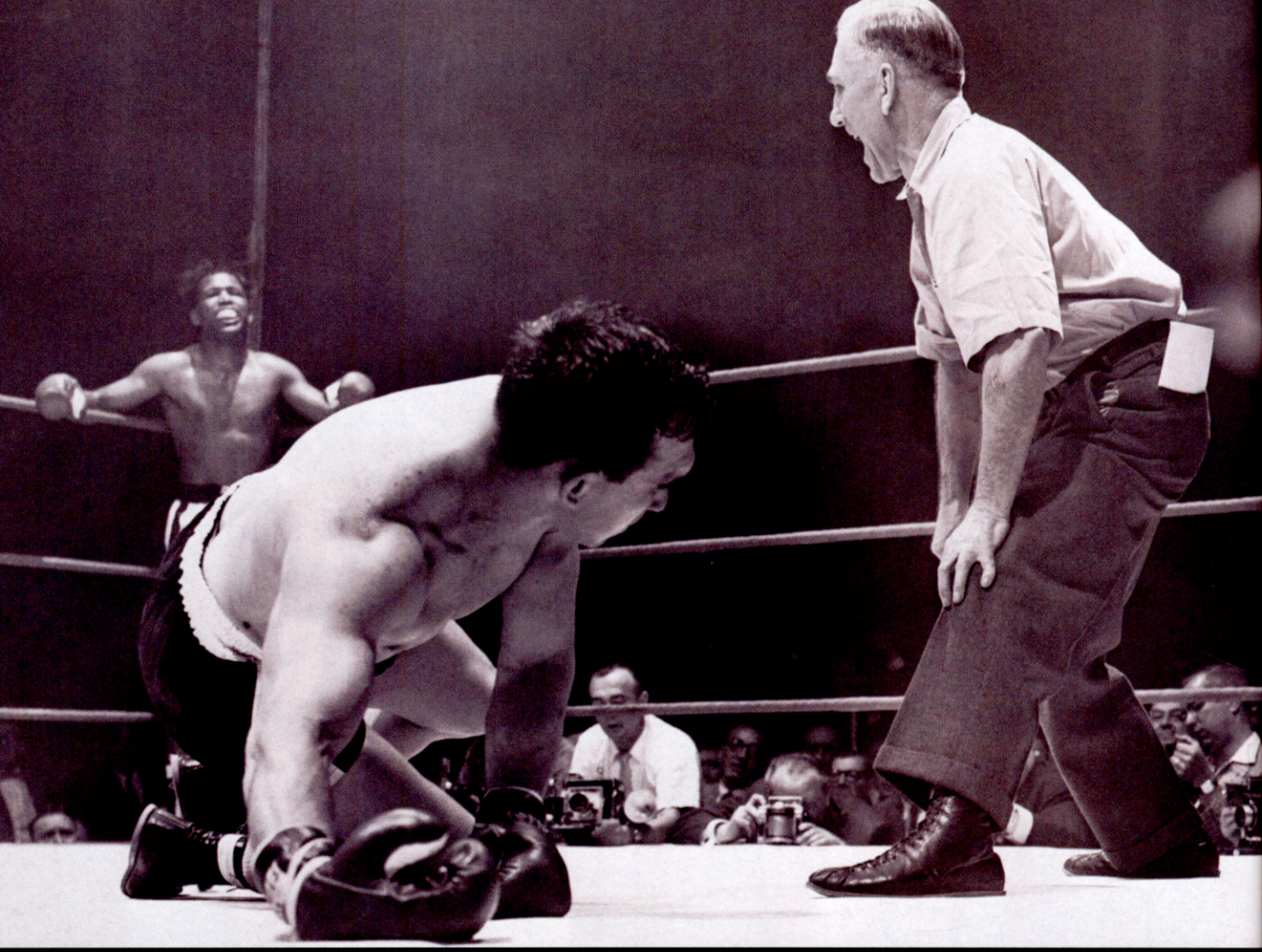
15

16

14. By the look on his face, Robinson either enjoys singing in the shower or that water was really cold.

15. Robinson's pitching form doesn't compare to his vaunted punching technique, but it ain't bad.

16. Robinson does road work with Garnet "Sugar" Hart, a Philadelphia amateur standout and welterweight contender during the 1950s. RING



FACING GREATNESS

By **Tris Dixon**

FOUR FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO TRADE PUNCHES WITH SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

Robinson ices Gene Fullmer with the "perfect punch."

It was the Fall of 2002.

I was living in Atlantic City and right around that time, Micky Ward and Arturo Gatti were preparing to do battle for a second time.

The increasingly dilapidated New Jersey seaside town had a big-fight feel about it as crowds and media people descended, even though there was a constant icy chill in the air.

During that fight week, I decided to take an old friend up on his offer to put me in touch with some ex-fighters. I'm not a somebody now, but I was a nobody then, so I never expected to actually spend time with any of them.

Aside from a couple of attempts at boxing journalism online, I wasn't even at four-round fighter level as a journalist.

Still, my friend Tom Jess gave me an address for former middleweight contender Rocky Castellani and a phone number for ex-middleweight champion Joey Giardello. I called Giardello first and we set a meeting at a restaurant in Cherry Hill, then I set off in the direction of Rocky's home.

This was at a time when mobile phones were not really a thing and text messaging was a relatively new invention. Even the internet was largely restricted

to homes with dial-up, internet cafes and public libraries.

Castellani's house appeared to be a short stroll down the famous Boardwalk.

Well, it turned out to be a good bit further than it looked – all the way down into Ventnor – and when I arrived, nobody was in.

It was actually also a few blocks back from the Boardwalk, in a nice area, but I went back to the boards to kill time before revisiting around 30 minutes later.

This time the doorbell was answered, and I tried to explain who I was and what I was trying to do.

I told Mary Castellani, Rocky's wife, that I was a novice boxing writer hoping to interview her husband. I said that I was from England, that it would be a privilege, and she invited me in.

As we spoke briefly in the front room, she warned me that Rocky's memory wasn't great and then took me through into a dining room.

Rocky was sitting quietly at a table, playing dominoes, cards or with a puzzle, and he peered up and welcomed me in as Mary introduced us.

I set my Dictaphone to record, and for about 45 minutes Rocky, with Mary by his side helping to jog his memory and probing for answers to my questions, assisted us.

Aside from the memory issues, the years had been kind to Rocky.

They had been married for 52 years, and after retiring from the ring, Castellani became a boxing judge and opened up a bar in Atlantic City, Rocky's, which he ran for years.

They'd lived at the same lovely house looking over the water of the inlets for decades, had four children and watched them grow up before they flew the nest.

It was life before then that had been hard for Rocky. After a childhood of poverty, he'd joined the Marine Corps at 16 in search of three square meals a day and then found himself in the middle of the wars in Guam and Iwo Jima where thousands of his comrades were killed.

He turned pro when he returned and was managed by Tommy Ryan, boxing a who's who of topliners, including Kid Gavilan, Ernie Durando, Ralph "Tiger" Jones, Johnny Bratton, Gene Fullmer and Joey Giambra.

"He was always very sincere," said Mary of Rocky's training regime. "He never did anything wrong. He ran every day at 5 a.m. with Marine boots on – big, heavy boots, not these sneakers you get now for $90. He used to run nothing but hills and would run five miles of those hills every morning. He'd eat a big steak every night with peas and carrots and no dressing on it, and that was it. He never cheated, never went out, didn't smoke, didn't drink. He was so, so strict."

Castellani was a professional for 13 years and retired with a record of 69 wins against 14 losses with six draws.

In 1954, he challenged Carl "Bobo" Olson for the world middleweight title. Olson was down for a count in the 11th. Rocky went down in the 12th before losing a 15-round decision, and less than a year later, he fought Sugar Ray Robinson at Cow Palace in Daly City.

A crowd of more than 8,000 saw 2-to-1 pre-fight favorite Castellani lose a split decision over 10 rounds, but not before he'd dropped Robinson for a count of nine in Round 6.

"When I fought Robinson, I had him down and everything else," remembered Rocky. "I was all over him. I lost a split decision. He fought [Jake] LaMotta so many times, but LaMotta wouldn't fight me, so I had to fight Robinson. I caught him with a left hook and dropped him."

He continued: "I fought a lot of great fighters."

I commended Rocky on his career and his lovely home. "What's nice about my house is I have a nice wife," he said while signing a copy of his autobiography, *Young Rocky*, and giving it to me as a parting gift.

He had also boxed Giardello, who I was now going to see in Cherry Hill. Castellani climbed off the deck in Round 3 to outscore Joey by a majority decision.

"Tell Giardello I'm making a comeback," he smiled, aged 75, full of respect for a man he called "a brilliant fighter." "I want to fight him again."

I jumped on the train to Cherry Hill, which is closer to Philadelphia than New Jersey, and fortunately the place Joey wanted to meet at, called the Diamond Diner, was near the station.

He brought an English friend who lived in the neighbourhood as a guest, and Peter Green sat and ate lunch with us.

Joey – he was born Carmine Tilelli – had also served in the military, and when I told him Rocky had said hello, he replied: "When I fought him, I was so disappointed because I beat the shit out of him [but didn't get the decision]. I was willing to fight him any time." There would be no rematch.

He also bristled when I mentioned Gene Fullmer, whom he drew with in Bozeman, Montana, in a gruelling fight marred by head clashes. Giardello felt he'd been robbed on the road.

"He butted me," Joey said. "He had his own judges there and everything."

Even against Terry Downes, in London, Giardello believed he got the wrong end of a hometown decision.

"Downes was a tough fighter, a good fighter, but I thought I won," he explained.

Giardello had been upset by Robinson not giving him a title shot years earlier. It had taken Joey more than a decade to get his first championship attempt, and he felt it was due to Robinson not fighting him.

They only eventually boxed when Robinson was told he had to meet Giardello in an eliminator for Dick Tiger's world title.

"That's why I thought a lot of him," Giardello said of Tiger. "The only reason Robinson fought me was because of Tiger."

At the time Giardello boxed Sugar, Robinson was 155-12-3, and Joey said: "He was the smartest guy I fought."

He dropped Ray in Round 4, and Robinson was hurt again in the sixth as more than 8,000 cheered them on inside Philadelphia's Convention Hall.

Ray came on strong in Rounds 7 and 8 but eventually ran out of gas. Giardello said straight afterward: "He was a great champion, but it's a shame his reflexes [were] gone now."

Giardello won on points over 10 rounds, and six months later he defeated Tiger to become the undisputed middleweight champion, a title he lost back to Tiger two years later.

Joey was brilliant company, so much fun, and he'd retained his lightning quick wit. He tried to charm the waitress into giving him a free lemon pie for dessert and then pretended to punch me as he happily posed for pictures.

Over the years, I've told people I went out to lunch with Joey, and those who knew him said, "I bet you paid!"

"No, I didn't," I replied.

But Peter Green did.

Interviewing fighters took me all over the USA for several months, and about half a year past the day I was with Rocky and Joey, I'd taken a bus to Salt Lake City where I visited Gene Fullmer at his home in West Jordan, Utah.

He had a lovely, inviting bungalow, and his fighting brothers, Don and Jay, lived in similar homes on either side of him.

There was a lot of land out back, but we spent most of our time chatting in his living room. It was the day after Lennox Lewis fought Vitali Klitschko and Fullmer lamented how the sport wasn't what it used to be.

Gene's wife, Karen, tried to reassure me that his involuntary shaking was not Parkinson's but the result of some recent open-heart surgery that had resulted in some cluster strokes, and the three of us sat and talked.

Gene was a wonderfully kind man and enormously generous with his time. He took me into his basement, where he showed me his incredible collection of memorabilia – including the Ring Magazine belt he won from Sugar Ray – and after we were done with the interview, Gene and Karen took me out to lunch.

Gene paid.

But I could tell that Gene had been a brute. His handshake was as firm as a heavyweight's.

Like the others, he'd served his country and was involved in the Korean War for two years, and as a pro he fought the best.

He'd outpointed my pal, Rocky Castellani, and would also fight Benny Paret (in the fight before Paret boxed Emile Griffith in the fight the Cuban never recovered from), Carmen Basilio (whom he beat twice), Florentino Fernandez, Chico Vejar and Ernie Durando. He was a human windmill who hit and hurt just about everything in front of him, and then I asked him about what happened in the Giardello fight – about that headbutt. "Giardello told me you butted him," I said.

Fullmer was incensed. He leapt up from his armchair and pulled me to my feet from mine.

Excited and perhaps a little angry, he grabbed my shoulders and said, "Giardello did this to me."

With that, he violently motioned a headbutt that fell just a few inches shy of my nostrils. "He ripped my head open," snarled Fullmer.

But Gene had good memories of Robinson, whom he fought four times in all. He beat Ray for the world middleweight title in Madison Square Garden in January 1957 before losing a return in May of the same year in Chicago Stadium. Then they fought to a draw in December 1960 in the Los Angeles Sports Arena and Gene outpointed Ray in their decider

Joey Giardello and Sugar Ray ham it up prior to their 1963 bout.

in March 1961 (even though the announcer initially incorrectly said Robinson had won) in the Convention Center in Las Vegas. "I'm glad I was fighting this guy when he was over his prime," Gene said after putting their rivalry to bed.

"When I fought Robinson for the title [in their first bout]," Gene recalled, pointing to a framed picture of a Mormon priest, "He (the priest) was there, and we had a word of prayer before the fight. I fought Robinson for 15 rounds for the championship of the world and didn't get any cuts or bruises, so my manager (Marv Jenson) wanted to keep him on and say a prayer every time!"

Their second fight was arguably the most famous of the four meetings, owing to the terrific fifth-round left hook that still litters highlight reels today.

It's often been called the perfect punch.

"That left hook," smiled Gene, shaking his head, "The Ring did a story for the best of this and that a few years ago and they said the best left hook ever thrown was by Robinson – and I caught it!"

How did it feel to take it?

"I don't know," Gene laughed. "When I came to, I said to my manager, 'How come Robinson's doing exercises between rounds?' He replied, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'He's jumping up and down in his corner.' He said, 'They counted 10 over you.' I never heard any of it."

Some thought Robinson deserved the verdict in their third fight, but Gene was a worthy winner in the fourth. "That was the easiest fight of all," he recalled. "I wouldn't necessarily call him the best ever. Then again, nobody else ever knocked me out."

Gene might have been a brawling brute several decades earlier, but I met a kind and humble man with a lovely wife.

"I've been pretty lucky in my life," he said. Asked whether he had any regrets, he went back to that left hook and simply joked, "I wish I'd not fought Robinson the second time!"

Having traveled around the USA interviewing old fighters, I figured I should start to try to talk to a few closer to home when I was back in England.

I called up former middleweight champion Terry Downes and he said he'd make time to see me, and I interviewed him for The Ring. Terry had done well out of life, too. He'd been married to Barbara since 1958 and hadn't just succeeded through boxing, but he'd hit the jackpot selling a chain of betting shops that allowed him to live well for the rest of his life.

Terry was still a spry bulldog when I visited. He happily preyed on my naivete and inexperience, cracking some admittedly funny and harmless jokes at my expense, and not only did we sit and talk, but he showed me around his impressive house and pointed out bits of memorabilia he'd kept from his career, including his Ring title, which he posed with for pictures in his garden.

Terry, who walked with a stick and smoked a pipe, was great. He was enormously colorful, and although he'd had a fine career, he'd taken no pleasure in beating Sugar Ray Robinson when they met in 1962. Robinson was well on the way down and a veteran of 163 fights. Although Sugar would have many more, Downes knew who he'd beaten that night and it wasn't the real Sugar Ray.

"He was just an old man when I fought him," admitted Downes without hesitancy. "It's just amazing to look at his record. At his best, it must have been incredible to watch him fight. If I had to fight him when he was in his prime, I would have run as far as I could go. It wouldn't have been a match. No one would have been stupid enough to make it. It's an embarrassment to have his name on my record. It's not a privilege to beat up an old man."

Downes, who also had a spell in the U.S. Marines after he and his family moved to the States, boxed the likes of Spider Webb, Phil Moyer and Don Fullmer, and he also outscored Giardello. His version of that contest was, "I boxed him and it paid off. It was a relatively easy fight."

Terry won and lost the title to Paul Pender (they fought three times), beat a 42-year-old Robinson and retired after losing to Willie Pastrano.

"I've had ups and downs, but I can't complain," said Terry. "I've got a nice house, nice kids, I've got a couple of quid in the bank, no business worries, nobody telling me to do this or do that. It's perfect."

Terry Downes passed away on October 6, 2017. He was 81.

Attilio "Rocky" Castellani died on August 31, 2008. Joey Giardello died four days later – on the day I coincidentally wrote Castellani's obituary for Boxing News. Rocky was 82. Joey was 78.

Rocky was buried at the Atlantic County Veterans Cemetery and a statue of him was erected in his hometown of Luzerne, Pennsylvania, and a statue of Giardello went up in Philadelphia.

Gene Fullmer died aged 83 on April 27, 2015, surrounded by friends and family, just five days after his younger brother Jay passed away. Middle brother Don had died in 2012.

They had all been wonderful fighters and could talk about their brushes with the great Sugar Ray Robinson into old age.

There was one who eluded me, however. Although I met Jake LaMotta several times, and he was pleasant on each occasion, as I passed through Manhattan one day I called him for an interview. I told him about his contemporaries who I'd met and spoken with, and he paused for thought.

"How much are you going to pay me for my time?" he asked.

"Well, geez, Mr. LaMotta, I don't have any money," I sadly and shyly replied.

"Well, kid," he sighed. "If you ain't got the money, you ain't got the money."

The phone line beeped and went dead.

Jake lived to 95 and died in September 2017. RING

PRI

WITNESS TO A LEGEND

EVEN A PAST-HIS-PRIME ROBINSON LEFT A DEEP IMPRESSION ON THOSE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO SEE HIM FIGHT IN-PERSON

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Newark Star-Ledger reporter Jerry Izenberg once covered a nondescript card at Madison Square Garden in New York in the late 1960s, when boxing was king. He can't remember who fought in the main event but, a half century later, he recalls in vivid detail something else that happened that night.

Sugar Ray Robinson, who had retired by this time, was honored during the show for the accomplishments over a 25-year career that turned him into a living icon.

Here's how Izenberg remembers the events:

"They decided to beef up the crowd, so they honored Robinson, who was out of boxing for a number of years," he said. "This is a true story. He steps into the ring and the place goes wild. It was a wonderful night. Now, [Mamma] Leone's Italian restaurant is two blocks away. All the fighters gathered there after events at the Garden. So as I'm walking, carrying my Olivetti typewriter, a father and son – both Black – are walking ahead of me. The father has his arm on the son's shoulder. He says, 'You should never forget this night.' The kid, about 8, 9, asks, 'Why?' 'You remember the man who took a bow tonight?' 'Yeah, who was he?' 'Son, that was the greatest fighter anyone ever saw. And now you can say you saw him.' That was terrific public testimony for Robinson, I thought."

Izenberg was one of six people – in their 70s, 80s or 90s – who were recently interviewed by The Ring for this story. All of them crossed paths with the man most knowledgeable observers believe is the greatest boxer who ever lived.

It's important to point out that only two of the six, Izenberg and promoter Don Elbaum, saw Robinson fight while he was in his prime. The rest encountered him years later, when he was still capable but not what he had been. One thing he never lost: He inspired awe until the day he died in 1989.

Here are their recollections.

DON ELBAUM

Don Elbaum is a former fighter and a promotional prodigy from Erie, Pennsylvania, who staged his first boxing show when he was 17. Years later, after becoming a major player who would promote more than 1,000 cards, he would arrange the final three fights of Robinson's career.

Elbaum was 11 years old when he first encountered Robinson. His mother took him to the historic Stillman's Gym in Manhattan, where Robinson happened to be working out. The kid didn't hesitate to approach the great man, who evidently got a kick out of his admirer.

"I walked up to him and said, 'My name is Don Elbaum.' And I started telling him about his past fights. He said, 'How old are you?' I said, '11.' He gave me his phone number and we were in touch the rest of his life," Elbaum said.

Elbaum was in attendance when a prime, 25-year-old Robinson knocked out Artie Levine in November 1946 at the Cleveland Arena. Levine, one of the hardest punchers of his era, put Robinson down in the fourth round and almost stopped him, only to be knocked out himself in the 10th and final round. [Editor's note: Some sources claim that Robinson was the beneficiary of a long count following the knockdown, and a few others say it took place in the fifth round.]

"I knew I was watching history; I knew it even then," Elbaum said. "... Artie dropped him, but he got up. I was close enough to see that his mind was still clear. Then, in the end, he had Levine against the ropes and that was it. He stopped him.

"He had that left jab. He could bang to the body. He put punches together like you couldn't believe. He could set you up, feint you out of position. It was just unbelievable."

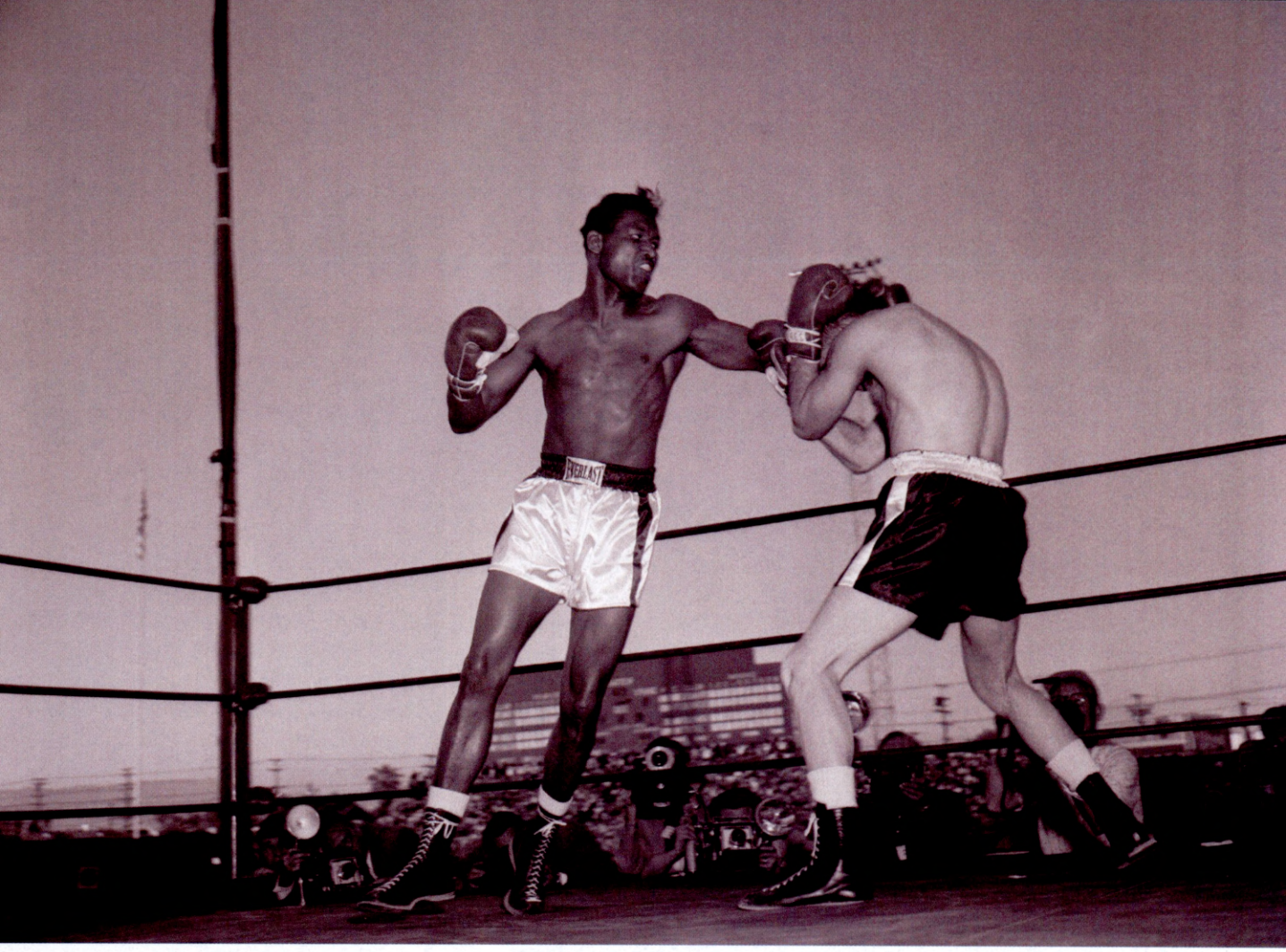
Robinson was 44 and nearing the end of the line when he reached out to Elbaum in 1965 with an idea he hoped would lead to a shot at one more world title.

"I was promoting in Pittsburgh when I got a call from Robinson," he said. "He said, 'Don, can you get me two fights that I can win so I can get one more title fight? He mentioned [light-punching contender] Joey Archer. 'Can you get me him?' he asked. I said, 'Absolutely, I can get you him. We can put the fight in Pittsburgh."

The plan was to have Robinson fight journeymen Peter Schmidt and Rudolph Bent, both of whom he could beat easily, and then face Archer at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh.

"I told him, 'Please, if you lose to Archer, it has to be your last fight," Elbaum said. "You have to announce your retirement. He said he'd do it,

Magnificently athletic, Robinson turned skipping rope into an entertainment routine.



Bobo Olson under fire from Sugar Ray in their fourth bout.

but he didn't. It wasn't until later, at Madison Square Garden, that he made the announcement."

Robinson was competitive against Archer but ended up on the losing side of a clear decision. He never fought again.

DAVE SCHWARTZ

A passion for boxing is often handed down from one generation to the next. That was the case with Los Angeles resident Dave Schwartz, whose father took him to see live fights when he was a child and initiated a lifelong passion.

Schwartz became a regular at the famous Main Street Gym in downtown L.A., through which every big-name fighter passed and fans could witness workouts for 25 cents. Schwartz and his friends saw them all, including champions like Roberto Duran, Jose Napoles and, yes, Sugar Ray Robinson.

"You never knew who would be there," Schwartz said. "I could just stay there forever and just soak it in."

Schwartz described Robinson as "my hero in life." To this day, he keeps a photo of Robinson on the wall of his office. It shows the fighter hanging from an awning in front of his restaurant in Harlem, Sugar Ray's, as a little boy looks on.

So it's no surprise that Schwartz jumped at the chance to see his idol defend his middleweight championship in his fourth fight against Bobo Olson in May 1956 at the old Wrigley Field in Los Angeles, a minor league ballpark. He was one of 20,000-plus fans on hand when the 35-year-old Robinson stopped Olson in the fourth round to retain his championship.

"That was real special, to see Sugar Ray Robinson fight," said Schwartz, obviously still excited about the experience. "... I remember there were a lot of people there. I was just lost in the crowd. That was my claim to fame, though: I saw Sugar Ray Robinson fight live.

"He was definitely diminished by that time. Still, just the way he moved, it was like watching a ballet dancer sort of. It might be a bigger deal to me now than it was then, but to think I saw him live ..."

BILL CAPLAN

Bill Caplan, a public relations institution in boxing, was a fan as a youngster who happened to be related to the right man. His brother-in-law, Larry Rumans, was Robinson's West Coast representative after World War II. And when Rumans would accompany Robinson to his training camps in Gilman Hot Springs – near Palm Springs in California – young Bill would accompany him.

Rumans shared one story about Robinson that has stuck with him.

"Robinson would drink a pint of blood [as part of his training regimen]," Caplan said. "Instead of taking vitamins or whatever, he'd drink [cow's] blood. Larry told

me that. He said he saw him do it several times."

And he remembers fondly the training sessions he witnessed himself.

"He was very entertaining to watch because of the way he punched the speed bag and jumped rope. It was very show business. One of the times he retired [and then returned], he had a nightclub act. And part of the act was rope jumping, fancy-schmancy rope jumping. It was fun to watch. He would do doubles, triples.

"And he hit the bag so fast. I remember at the end of his sessions he would knock it loose from the board with a left hook. Entertaining."

Caplan also had a not-so-entertaining experience involving Sugar Ray. Robinson was set to face Gene Fullmer on May 1, 1957, in a rematch and a third opportunity to regain the middleweight title at Chicago Stadium. Caplan lived in Des Moines, Iowa, and would make the 4½-hour drive to Chicago the night before the fight in his brand new Ford Country Squire station wagon, which surfers would call a "Woody."

He was lucky to get there alive. He drove over a hill on Highway 6 – a two-lane road – to see a car stopped in front of him. To avoid it, he swerved, rolled the car multiple times and ended up in a ditch. He emerged with a separated shoulder and other minor injuries, which were treated at a nearby hospital.

Nevertheless, he was still determined to see the fight. The car was undrivable so he took a train to Chicago, where he checked into a hotel and soaked in a hot bath to alleviate the pain. George Gainsford, Robinson's colorful manager, got him a prime seat on the second level. One problem, though: Caplan had brought $350 to bet on Robinson, who was a 4-1 underdog. However, the "gamblers section" was on the first floor, and Caplan was suffering too much from the accident to make it there. He didn't place the bet.

Robinson won the fight and the title with what history has referred to as the "perfect punch," a left hook that removed Fullmer's head from the board in the fifth round.

"I would've won $1,400," Caplan recalled. "That's like $14,000 today. I just couldn't place the bet."

For Robinson, it was a joyful moment. For Caplan, it was painful in more ways than one.

JERRY IZENBERG

Izenberg was in attendance as a fan when Robinson, at 29, defended his welterweight title against capable contender Charley Fusari in August 1950 at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Robinson, who never lost at 147

Robinson prepares for his final welterweight title defense against Charley Fusari.

pounds, won a near-shutout decision in the 15-round fight. It would turn out to be his last at the weight.

"He was masterful," said Izenberg, the author of the boxing book Once There Were Giants. "There was only one judge, the referee. He scored the fight 15-0, if I recall. Just masterful." [Editor's note: Referee Paul Cavalier scored the bout 13-1 with one round even.]

Then Izenberg related a story about a fight – in October 1965 – in which Robinson, at 44, wasn't masterful. In fact, he was badly faded for all but a few magic moments, which reminded those watching that they were witnessing a fighter who was once untouchable.

"I consider it Robinson's last stand," he said. "He was asked to fight Peter Schmidt, the 'Fighting Milkman.' He was the champion of Canada, but how many top welterweights were from Canada? The fight took place at a hockey arena in Johnstown [Pennsylvania]. They had a wooden floor laid over the ice. And it was in the fall. What happens in Western Pennsylvania in the fall? High school football. They were competing with 60 games. Almost nobody showed up.

"It was a 10-round fight. Robinson had no interest in doing anything in the ring. And he didn't. Long about the seventh, eighth round, the crowd is booing. Then, for one round, he became Sugar Ray Robinson. The guy didn't know what hit him. He's throwing combinations, he's moving beautifully. He really looked great. Then someone pulled the fountain of youth away and he went back to what he had been doing. Of course, he won the fight. Robinson was Robinson until the end."

LARRY MERCHANT

Larry Merchant's father-in-law, who grew up in Connecticut, was a devoted fan of favorite son Willie Pep, so much so that he would travel from location to location to watch him fight. The Will o' the Wisp was godlike to many, even as an amateur in the 1930s.

The father-in-law related to Merchant his first Robinson sighting.

"There was an amateur tournament," said Merchant, the Hall of Fame journalist and broadcaster. "Willie Pep was a superstar amateur, as you can imagine. Robinson was entered in the tournament. And Robinson beat Pep when they were bantamweights, teenaged bantamweights. People couldn't believe their eyes, because nobody could beat Pep. They supposedly locked Robinson up for a few hours – I wasn't there, I don't have anything written on it – because they thought he was a ringer, a pro.

"That's either a story that gets exaggerated over time or it's true, but it gives you an idea of the legendary status that Robinson would create."

Merchant would run into Robinson himself years later. He was the sports editor of The Philadelphia Daily News when he covered his first major fight: Robinson vs. Carmen Basilio I in 1957 at Yankee Stadium.

"I was 26," he said. "As I've told people, I was sitting diagonally across the ring from Ernest Hemingway and Joe DiMaggio. I thought to myself, 'OK, I'm in the right place.'"

Of course Merchant knew of Robinson. Everyone did by this time. At almost 36 years old and with 150 fights under his belt, Sugar Ray had already won world titles at welterweight and middleweight and established himself as one of the best of all time.

The question was: Would his performance match his reputation in

Both Robinson-Basilio bouts received Ring Magazine Fight of the Year honors.

Merchant's eyes?

"In a way, yes, it did," Merchant said. "I was probably distracted by some kind of admiration. I read so many columns about him, by Jimmy Cannon and many other writers. But you could see the elegance he had. He had the movement of a model in a dangerous game.

"... Basilio was a very strong, tough guy. He was uncommon in that way. He was able to get inside to make his style work to bury Robinson's style. It looked to me that Robinson was not in his prime."

Robinson lost a split decision and his middleweight title that night. He won the rematch by a split decision six months later in Chicago.

"When I went to Chicago to see the rematch, it was like he was in a battle of survival with himself," Merchant said. "I always thought of him as silky in his movement, but he was able to survive and thrive with guys like Jake LaMotta, Rocky Graziano and Fullmer and so on. And some of that was there that night, the way he elegantly took down Basilio."

Robinson would continue to fight until 1965, but that was his last great victory.

RICK FARRIS

The young boxer emerged from the dressing room one early Saturday morning in 1969 at the Main Street Gym in downtown Los Angeles to a shocking sight: Sugar Ray Robinson was pounding one of several heavy bags.

"I remember thinking, 'That's Sugar Ray Robinson!" Rick Farris said.

Farris, 17 at the time, wanted a better look, so he pulled up in front of the next bag and began to do his own work. He had one eye on the apparatus he was hitting and the other one on the boxing legend, a fit 48-year-old wearing his familiar rubber training suit, who was a few feet away.

And Robinson gave him something special to see.

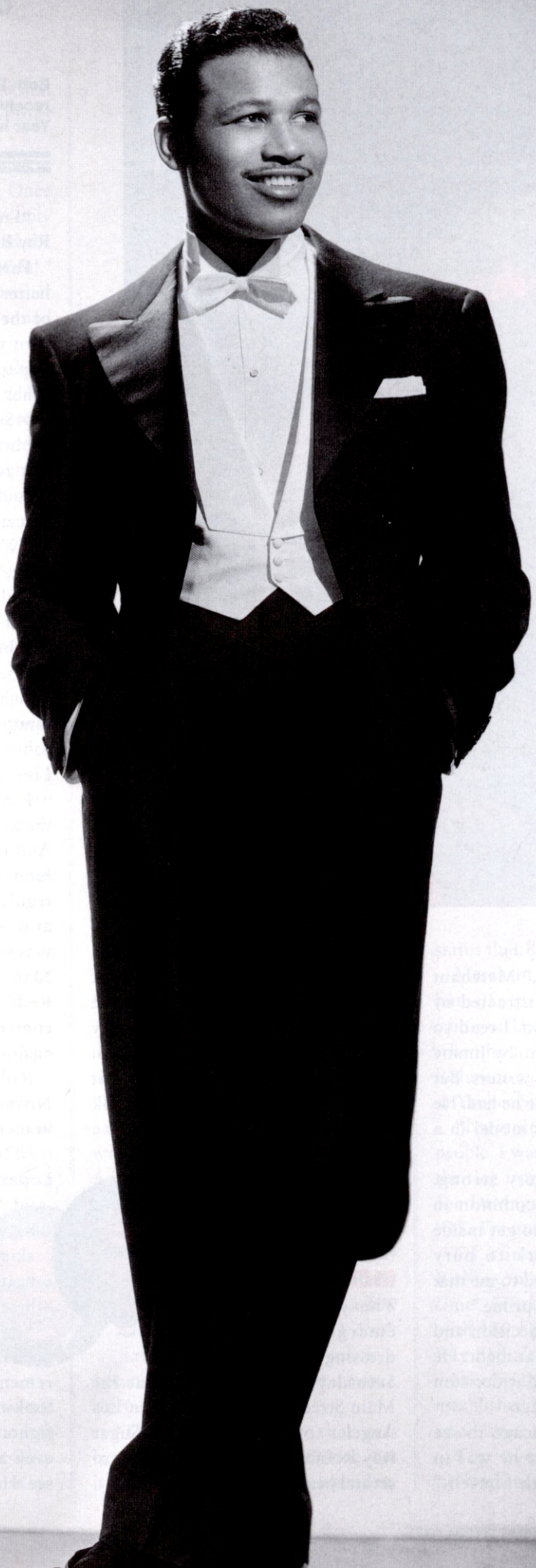
"When the 10-second buzzer rang," Farris said, referring to the signal that the workout round was about to end, "he whips this beautiful left hook and folds the bag. Then the bell rang. I thought, 'Is that the punch he hit Gene Fullmer with [to famously stop him in 1957]?' I was too young to know, but that's what I imagined."

Farris would run into Robinson at the gym many more times after that. And the Hall of Famer didn't limit himself to the heavy bag: He sparred regularly, sometimes with champions and elite contenders. Robinson was almost 50 when he shared the Main Street ring with Ernie "Indian Red" Lopez, the 24-year-old No. 1 contender training for his title fight against Jose Napoles.

Robinson had last fought in November 1965, when he was 44 years old.

"They worked well together. Lopez had nothing on him," Farris said. "Was I surprised? No. The way he worked the bags, the way he skipped rope, which was a thing of beauty. He was still working with these guys into his 50s.

"It was beautiful to watch. He'd go hard, he'd get cracked. I don't remember ever seeing him hurt or looking hurt, though. He liked to fight. He usually made guys miss, even at that age. It was amazing to see. He was amazing."



SUGAR IN A TUX

ROBINSON TRIED TO CASH IN ON HIS FAME OUTSIDE OF THE RING BOTH DURING AND AFTER HIS BOXING CAREER, BUT HE FOUND THAT SUCCESS IN SHOW BUSINESS WAS MORE ELUSIVE THAN IN THE HURT BUSINESS

By **Herb Boyd**

Muhammad Ali often proclaimed that he was the greatest of all time (G.O.A.T), but on occasion he also acknowledged that there was one greater than he was – Sugar Ray Robinson. They could very well have shared equal billing to this pinnacle, both having iconic, remarkable records during their careers in the ring.

In common, too, was their magnetic appeal, dashing good looks, panache and a commanding presence wherever they appeared in public, particularly in the glare of flashing cameras. Like Ali, Ray Robinson was not his birth name but one given to him at a moment's notice, making him eligible for an amateur bout. Not too many fights later, given his style and ability, "Sugar" was added, and that was even more in keeping with the profession dubbed the "sweet science."

Ali's infectious charisma was showcased in a number of film and television appearances, including a starring role in *The Greatest*, a dramatized version of his life. There was also a four-performance run on Broadway with him as "Buck White," and, according to reviews, he "got people on their feet for five straight minutes," longer than the duration of a round of boxing. A couple of decades before, Sugar Ray, after suffering a debilitating defeat to light heavyweight champ Joey Maxim, was similarly on his way to a stage as a song-and-dance man. Joe Glaser, who had attained fame as a talent agent, handling such jazz immortals as Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong and Billie Holiday, coaxed him out of boxing retirement and into a less hazardous, if no less demanding, venture in show business.

Preparing for a dance number, a routine rope-skipping in time with "Sweet Georgia Brown" and then breaking into song required a training regimen almost as tiring and rigorous as getting ready for 10 rounds of boxing. In 1952, Sugar's debut at the French Casino inside the Paramount Hotel on 46th Street, just west of Broadway, was not as auspicious as his first ring encounter – a second-round TKO victory over Joey Echevarria in 1940 at Madison Square Garden, after which Robinson won 39 successive fights before losing to Jake LaMotta two-and-a-half years later. At the casino, in a musical number backed by showgirls – "long-limbed lovelies imported from France," wrote his wife, Edna Mae – Sugar was the victim of a poorly developed skit. "It was as if it had been resurrected from a bad show in the days of burlesque. Not risqué, but not funny. I frankly was embarrassed."

To ease his move into the world of entertainment without Everlast gloves, mouthpiece and silk shorts, Sugar had a dance partner: his wife, much to her and Glaser's chagrin. Edna Mae could speak with authority about stage productions. When her off-off-Broadway role in *Born Yesterday* ended, she set aside some of her responsibilities running the various businesses they had – none more challenging than the block-long companies on Seventh Avenue in Harlem – to tutor her husband on how to strut, spin and move gracefully across the stage.

Henry LeTang, a renowned dance instructor, was also enlisted to coach Sugar on doing simple rhythm steps. As Sugar polished his movements and improved his stage presence, Glaser was making the rounds, talking up his client's performance skills to club owners and noted impresarios.

LeTang was a taskmaster, pushing Sugar as hard as any of his trainers, insisting that his legs had to be strong enough, empowered with sufficient stamina to dance throughout the night. "You must understand," LeTang said repeatedly, "you are telling a story with your feet." Of course, there was more to Robinson's performance than dancing; there was the occasional song, the repartee and even a few jokes. These moments, LeTang reminded him, had to be perfectly timed between the rhythmic tap and the tails of his swirling tuxedo. It was often so grueling that Sugar was ready to let it go and tend the bar at his club in Harlem.

To some extent, Sugar found relief when he was part of a musical extravaganza, like the one in Chicago in the winter of 1954 featuring Count Basie and his band along with The Dominoes, a popular doo-wop group. Such a touring assemblage wasn't unusual during this period, possibly because it was a way to attract a widespread audience. Augmenting their nights at the Chicago Theater, they had agreed to a one-night stand

BETTMANN

Robinson, pictured in 1958, is splendiferous despite having engaged in roughly 150 prizefights.

Robinson with then-wife Edna Mae attending an after-fight party.

at the DuSable High School. Things did not go well. The first part of the show went far too long, which exasperated folks who had attended mainly to see Sugar. It was almost midnight before Robinson was summoned to the stage.

An article in *Ebony* magazine captured some of the fans' (and Robinson's) frustration. "He zipped through a mediocre performance," the reporter wrote, "insulted an influential Negro disc jockey, ignored a talented nine-year-old dancer who had appeared in the first show and stayed costumed until after 1 a.m. with the understanding that he was to appear with Sugar in the second show. The handful of [admirers] who stayed until the end left Sugar's show firmly resolved never to see him again." One reaction to the Chicago flop was to go overseas where, no matter what he did, a standing ovation was guaranteed.

Sugar had a few warm-up dates on the French Riviera before arriving in Paris for a major appearance. Accompanying him was the pianist and jazz singer Bob Dorough, who had met Robinson at LeTang's studio. Dorough had won Sugar's approval after a command from LeTang to play "Green Eyes." "You're going on the road with us," Sugar effused, a trip Dorough relished. They sailed across the Atlantic on the luxurious ocean liner *Ile de France*, and their performances on board were akin to rehearsals. But, apparently, that practice was not enough. "We bombed in Paris," Dorough said, "Larry Adler, a harmonica player, stole the show." Their show was billed as "The Champ," but they ended up feeling like a couple of chumps. When the tour ended, Dorough remained in Paris, and Sugar, who had come to France in first class, returned to the States as a second-class passenger.

From discussions with his friends and associates, Robinson finally conceded to put his rope-skipping routine back in his act, and that meant his dazzling feet keeping time with an up-tempo, jazzy number while attired in boxing shorts. This was a certain connection to his fans, as well as a way back to those days of training for a fight. Soon, the articles about his ring greatness exceeded those celebrating his arrival on the entertainment circuit. A return to the ring seemed inevitable. Glaser was able to get a few club dates where Sugar could skip rope, but they didn't bring in the cash he needed to hold off the creditors and solve the financial problems incurred by bad investments, leeches and, most troubling, the IRS. He began to compare the earnings of one night in the ring with a slew of club dates, and pulling on the gloves and hanging up the tap shoes was the only feasible option.

On a bone-chillingly cold night in Hamilton, Ontario, Sugar returned to a world he knew well with an exhibition fight against Gene Burton,

BETTMANN

a stablemate. It was a solid tune-up for his date with Joe Rindone in 1955 at the Olympia Stadium in Detroit. Rindone was knocked out in six rounds, Sugar's 138th victory.

By this time, Sugar had 62 fights left before leaving the fight game. The Ali-Robinson comparisons alluded to earlier would acquire a more substantial meaning in 1964 when Sugar became a member of Cassius Clay's retinue, putting him back in contact with Bundini Brown, who for seven years had worked in Sugar's corner. Bundini was the comic and pressure relief Clay needed before and during a bout. "Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee" was his most famous advice to Clay. Now Sugar was in Clay's corner, at least inspirationally. When Robinson was not actually by Clay's side, he sat ringside near Sam Cooke and Malcolm X. Robinson told Clay that he must be the matador to Sonny Liston's bull. "You can't match strength with Liston, just like I couldn't match strength with LaMotta. He was the bull, but I was the matador and I outsmarted him. You can beat Liston the same way."

This was an easy tactic for Clay to follow, since he had, almost from the beginning of his career, emulated Sugar's style and finesse. As we all know now, Clay followed his mentor's orders perfectly, and Sonny had been totally eclipsed by the young fighter who later would announce his membership in the Nation of Islam. Robinson presumed that Malcolm X – whom he was never comfortable around – had persuaded Clay to join the NOI and change his name to Muhammad Ali. Sugar quickly packed his bags and left Miami, leaving Ali in the hands of his new hero.

That could have been the end of their relationship, but Sugar – practically flat broke – found it best to reconcile with Ali, desperately needing him by his side for a fight in Kingston, Jamaica, against Jimmy Beecham in March 1965. Ali acceded to Robinson's request and worked in his corner as a second. Ali provided Sugar with the spiritual support and, most importantly, was an added attraction in drawing more people to the fight, which Robinson won by second-round knockout.

There would be one more episode involving Ali and Sugar. After the fight, Ali was incensed that his then-wife, Sonji, while attending a party, was carelessly allowing her miniskirt to rise higher and higher with each move she made. Ali, infuriated by her indifference to this violation of Muslim decorum, snatched her by the arm and marched her off to a restroom, locked the door and began loudly berating her. Hearing the exchanges of screaming and yelling, Sugar went to the door and asked if everything was all right. "Listen," Ali

The former champ poses alongside Ali, then Cassius Clay, and football star Jim Brown.

barked, "I'm gonna open this door in a second, and if you ain't gone, I'm gonna whip you good. You ain't nothing but a middleweight, so go on. Mind your own business." When the couple emerged from the toilet and as they walked away, Sugar could see that their relationship had reached a breaking point, and so had his and Ali's.

Robinson's marriage to Edna Mae was also unraveling, and a divorce seemed the only option left for the former lovers. The rocky, contentious marriage had consumed much of Sugar's time outside the ring, to say nothing of his developing romance to Millie, his next and last wife.

Fighting only sporadically and with the IRS hounding him, Robinson immersed himself in the political realm, keeping busy campaigning for mayoral candidate John Lindsay in the summer of 1965. One major stop for Lindsay on the campaign trail was to Rev. Gardner Taylor's Concord Baptist Church, the largest in Brooklyn. Sugar was right by the candidate's side, assuring him of additional attention from the congregants and onlookers. But things soured between them after Lindsay, now the mayor and apparently overbooked, was unable to keep an appointment with Robinson, who stormed out of his office. It drew a headline in a major daily newspaper. Lindsay, Sugar told the press, "seems to have changed since he got elected. I hope I don't regret that I campaigned for him."

On November 10, 1965, in Pittsburgh, Sugar lost his last fight to Joey Archer, a decision that was widely disputed. He received some recompense a month later when the executives at Madison Square Garden honored him for his greatness in the ring. Several of his former opponents – including fellow middleweight champs Randy Turpin, Gene Fullmer, Bobo Olson and Carmen Basilio – joined Sugar in the ring, all of them taking a separate corner, wearing boxing gloves and a robe. It was a grand opportunity to let bygones be bygones, to talk about their bouts with each other and generally recount what could no longer happen. When Muhammad Ali and John Lindsay showed up for the tribute, Sugar chatted with them, patching up the rifts that had torn them apart.

Sugar may have no longer possessed the consistent jab or the menacing left hook and right uppercut, but the years in the ring had not spoiled his handsome face or exhausted those spindly but fantastic legs. These bona fides were sufficient reasons to give the world of song and dance another try. In the early '60s, Sugar had recorded an album of songs called *I'm Still Swinging*, so he decided to give it a second round with *Sugar Ray*. It included a number of prominent jazz musicians. According to his son, Ray Robinson II, it didn't receive the acclaim he had earned trading punches, though there was general agreement that Sugar could carry a tune and had a pleasant baritone voice in the tradition of Billy Eckstine.

"There wasn't a wide distribution of the album," his son said. "I have no idea how many were printed or whether it was ever reviewed." He didn't have great vocal range, but he was engaging on up-tempo numbers, which matched the nimble dance footwork that can be seen on YouTube in an appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1951.

There was little cash or cachet from his recordings, so Sugar then put his acting ability before audiences, including on television dramas where he appeared with such actors as Danny Thomas, Mickey Rooney and Ben Gazzara. Exposure also came from his role in the movie *The Detective*, starring his friend Frank Sinatra. It was only a bit part as a cop, but it got him a larger part in the television show *Mission:*

Belted by a Beatle: Robinson appeared in a movie alongside Ringo Starr.

KEYSTONE-FRANCE

The great ex-champ with another music icon, Bob Marley, circa 1979.

GREG COBARR

Impossible in an episode that focused on the underworld's grip on boxing. Sugar, of course, felt right at home in this context. In the 1968 film *Candy,* he got even wider exposure since it featured such stars as Richard Burton, Marlon Brando and Ringo Starr. But overall, he was now reduced to being a bit player in B-movies or a celebrity cameo in television productions.

Sugar Ray's image and popularity didn't really need the media, films or television, though, because a drive through Harlem in his pink Cadillac, his stylish, trend-setting hair glistening in the sun, was enough to bring a long line of his fans to the sidewalk. "It was a moment you didn't want to miss," said photographer Clint Edwards, "and one you would never forget."

When he arrived at an event, a hospital visit, a charity fundraiser, in support of a political aspirant or to pick up his son from school, glitter and glamour traveled with him. He exuded an inexhaustible radiance, and it was almost impossible to take your eyes off of him. If you happened to miss him at a sporting event or a big Fifth Avenue shindig, the magazines, particularly the African American publications such as Jet, Ebony, and Sepia, with their cover stories kept you up to date on where the latest Sugar Ray moment occurred on the planet. Many Black Americans – and a few white ones, too – vicariously soared with him to that pinnacle of success and acclaim. And when he appeared on the cover of Time Magazine in June 1951, that issue sold out faster than the posters he often offered at his bar on Seventh Avenue.

Owning any memorabilia featuring Sugar Ray's name or image was how many of his fans realized a connection, hoping and dreaming that magnetism or that powerful charisma he possessed would somehow rub off on them. My mother was one of the countless number of women who absolutely adored him and never missed any of his fights when they were broadcast, and I was right there with her cheering Sugar on. And I consoled her whenever Sugar lost, but that was rare.

Trying to get back on his feet economically in failing health took what energy and optimism Sugar could muster. But even against a current of setbacks, he registered an equal number of triumphs. One accomplishment that was a source of absolute delight for him was the Sugar Ray Robinson Youth Foundation, which he established once he moved to Los Angeles in 1969. The foundation was set up to provide underprivileged youth in the community with social, sports and other recreational activities. However, it sponsored no boxing program. He often appeared at the foundation's various events, if for no other reason than to wave and flash that famous smile. Gradually, the onset of diabetes, hypertension and Alzheimer's would do what very few could do in the ring.

Whether in or out of the ring, in a tux or boxing togs, behind a set of drums or behind the bar at his café – and most certainly behind the wheel of his Cadillac – Sugar was the toast of the town. The "sweet science" never had a fighter sweeter than Sugar.

EVERLAST

A STAR IN ANY ERA

By **Gareth A Davies**

GIVEN ALL OF HIS EXTRAORDINARY ATTRIBUTES IN AND OUT OF THE RING, **ROBINSON** EASILY COULD'VE ACHIEVED GLOBAL SUPERSTARDOM IN AN AGE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Boxing stars (left to right) Sugar Ray Leonard, Roy Jones, Jr. and Floyd Mayweather, Jr.

Whichever era we witness, it is always THE era. Be it in boxing, music, entertainment or technology. But Sugar Ray Robinson was simply special, could have blessed any era, and it is not just the television footage or testimony of others that pays homage to that. The body of Robinson's work is there, based on activity and the volume of his fights, in plain sight. We might hanker for a time machine to go back to witness his skills live, but we know what Ray Robinson did: History records that he fought in four divisions and won undisputed titles in two of those weight classes.

But just how many titles could he have won today with 17 divisions? How big a star would he have been in the present day, with social media, greater accessibility in the moment and the shrinking global village the planet has become? How endorsement-rich would have been the career of the boxer many of us accept as the greatest ever?

Those who saw him in the ring, met him and enjoyed his aura, watched him train and develop, believe Robinson could have stood on the shoulders of giants in any era, crossing into the mainstream.

Starting at the very tail end of his career, Robinson fought 14 times in 1965 (11 of those bouts as a 44-year-old). It beggars belief now, given the fact that

Team Sugar Ray at full strength during the glory years.

GORDON PARKS/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION

those comparable to him, such as Floyd Mayweather Jr., fought his last 14 fights over a decade from 2006-2017, claiming world titles in five weight classes.

Speaking to those who knew him, those who watched him, wrote about him and who still write and observe today, Robinson's stellar career is most comparable to that of Mayweather. Indeed, outside the ring as a sportsman and entertainer, he would have reached the same global heights, if not beyond, according to a triumvirate of boxing Hall of Famers.

Three years ago in his home in Cambria, California, the sage, late promoter and matchmaker Don Chargin told me a thing or two about the Robinson he got to know. Chargin took us back to 1949, and Robinson, 92-1-2 in his career at the time (yes, rub your eyes), was campaigning at or slightly above the welterweight limit. "I got very close to him. Sugar Ray had a fight with Earl Turner, who was a huge [draw] in Oakland, California," recalled Chargin, who was 22 years old at the time and was a couple of years away from starting his promotional company in boxing. "I used to take a Greyhound bus from my hometown 50 miles to Oakland just to watch Sugar Ray work out. One day he noticed me there, because I was in awe of the moves and everything he did. He came over and started talking to me. It was the thrill of my life. Here's Ray Robinson talking to me. Each day he would do that and we'd talk a little more. To my surprise – boom – one day I'm there and he gave me a front row ringside ticket to his fight with Turner. During the fight – I'll never forget it; it was during the fourth round – he pulled Turner into him and looked down to me and gave me a wink, like, 'How am I doing?' From that day on, we became friends until he died. He was in Los Angeles when he died. He used to come to my shows at the Olympic [Auditorium in Downtown L.A.]. It killed me to see him keep fighting at the tail end."

Chargin is adamant that Robinson's skillset was beyond anything he ever saw and that he would have been a major star in this day and age. Not just a major star in boxing, but a major star. Period. "Robinson was head and shoulders above any fighter. He had speed, punching power with either hand. He could do everything. He had everything, inside and outside the ring," he explained, adding: "He

would not take a fight unless he was 100 percent. If he had little sniffles, he'd pull out of a fight. He was not a promoter's dream. He had to be perfect.

"He had his detractors. Ray admitted he was tough to get along with. A fight had to be right. Nobody taught Robinson anything. It was all God-given. George Gainford was his longtime head trainer. You could see George in any arena before the fight with the tape measure measuring that ring. If that ring was three inches off, they'd have to tear it all down. That was because Robinson was such a perfectionist. That was his office. An amazing man.

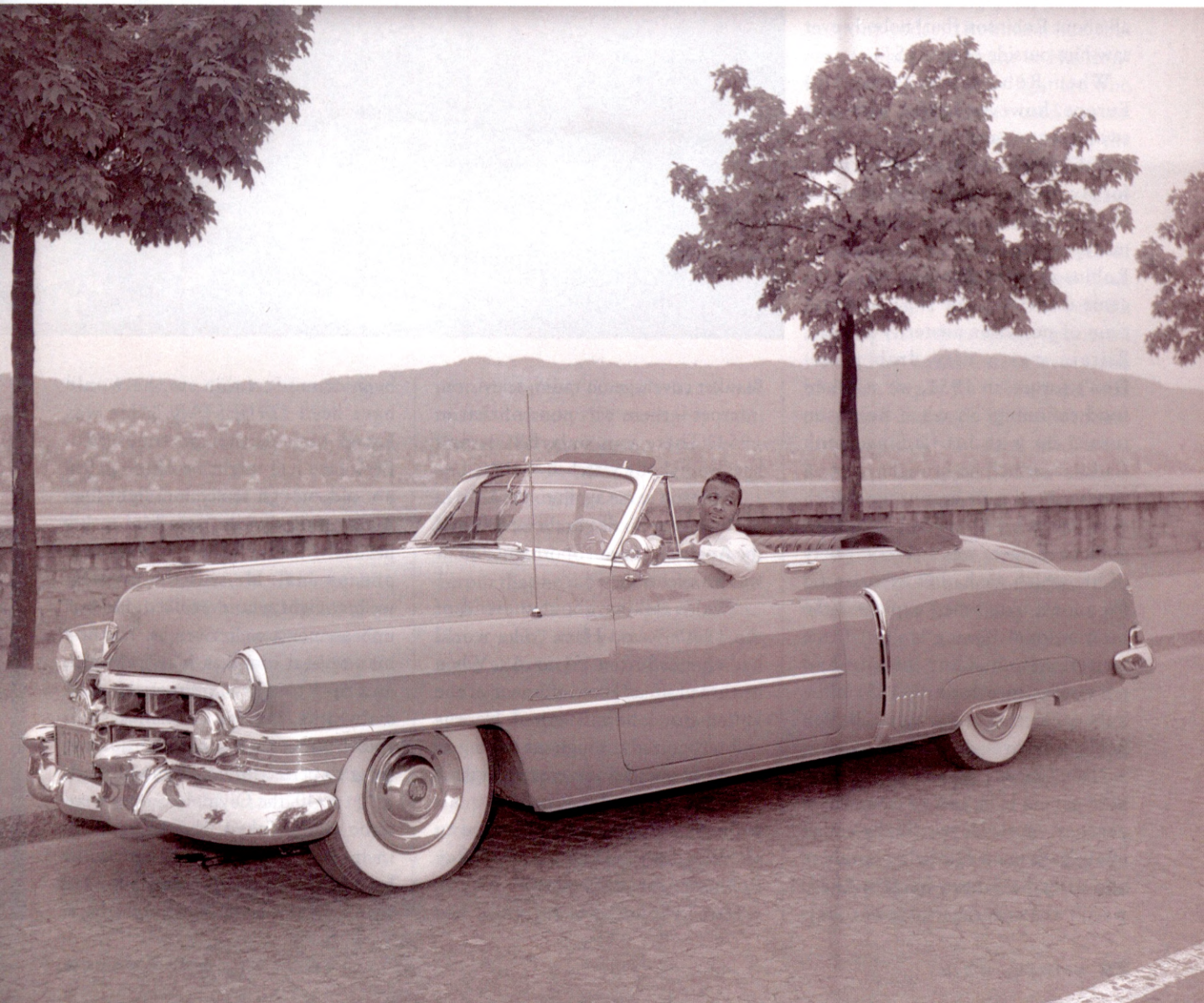
"Bottom line is that Robinson was probably better technically than any fighter that ever lived. One day, Ray and I were talking. I said, 'George's been training you for a long time; he really must know his stuff.' Ray said, 'Don, take this the way I'm saying it: George never taught me anything, but he taught me loyalty. Wherever I go, George always has my back. That is the most important thing to me.' Ray never had to worry with George."

Jerry Izenberg, who has been in sports journalism for 70 years and is still writing on boxing into his 90s, can make any comparison across the eras. Now a resident of Las Vegas, he started his commentary at the end of Robinson's career. The very end. "I feel very strongly about Sugar Ray Robinson. I saw him at the end of his career, his very last fight [his 201st fight, against Joey Archer]. I wanted to cry for him. He was gone.

Plain and simple, Jerry is adamant that Robinson would be a world star today. "Yes, absolutely. He had that aura of stardom. He had everything about him. He could give interviews. He had a very engaging smile and life. He could break into a tap dance; he could do that professionally. When he skipped rope, the gym stopped. He had the aura. And he was a guy who was maybe more popular than Muhammad Ali among Black people in Harlem. He had his bar. If the pink Cadillac he drove was parked there, people would come rushing to the bar.

"His only flaw, though, was an occasional lack of interest in an opponent," recalled Izenberg. "He reminded me a lot of Archie Moore. I'm not saying that it was corrupt, but I am saying they often got disinterested in opponents. So as a result, they were loaning their title to

Robinson out cruising in the iconic flamingo-pink Cadillac.



ULSTEIN BILD DTL.

somebody who, when they lost, they were half fighting. They always won the rematch. Always. His movement was just spectacular."

That "lack of interest" played a part when Robinson lost the middleweight crown to Randolph Turpin in London in 1951. "He didn't take Turpin seriously the first time; I really don't think he did," Izenberg surmised. "Turpin was a good fighter. I'm not denigrating Turpin, but he wasn't Ray Robinson. Nobody was Ray Robinson. When he came to fight Turpin, he came to the U.K. with about 12 people in his entourage. One of them was his barber.

"I would say he was the Muhammad Ali of his day. But, of course, because there was no such thing as internet or social media, his fame wasn't global. Boxing people knew him. Most boxing fans knew all about Robinson [but] nobody ever saw him outside of the U.S."

When Robinson did travel to Europe, however, it was with that swollen entourage.

Colin Hart, a U.K.-based journalist for six decades and a boxing writer for five of those, takes up the story of just how much of a media sensation Robinson proved to be. "When he came to the U.K. in 1951, it was a time of post-war austerity Britain. Britain was a very drab place. Don't forget, in 1951, we still had food rationing. So when Robinson turned up with his flamingo-pink Cadillac, which he brought over on the boat, and an entourage which even included his personal barber, golf coach, there was a certain gaiety of life which we hadn't experienced for a long, long time," explained the International Boxing Hall of Fame writer. "How many people had televisions in Britain in 1951? The only contact he had with the British public was through newspapers.

"Don't forget, you've to realize that newspapers back in 1951 had three pages of sport. He eventually ended up on page one while he'd been there and after he'd been beaten. There wasn't the coverage there is today. Blanket coverage on radio, television, internet – there was none of that in 1951. There was only BBC1, and hardly anybody watched that."

Robinson came again to the U.K. in the Swinging Sixties to the opening of the Anglo-American Sporting Club. It was an event.

"We're talking about the end of the 1960s," said Hart. "The world had changed from '51 to '69. When he turned up as guest of honor at the Hilton Hotel, he was retired. He was still recognized throughout boxing as pound-for-pound the greatest fighter who'd ever lived. Muhammad Ali willingly agreed to that. He used to say, 'I'm not the greatest. Sugar Ray Robinson was the greatest.'"

Hart reckons that if Sugar Ray had been around in this era, he would have been "THE STAR." "He was Floyd Mayweather Jr. times two. Let's face it. I might be old, but I'm not old enough to see him fight live. But everybody who saw him in his heyday will tell you he was absolutely phenomenal. He was the greatest welterweight who ever lived. He was unbeaten as a welterweight. The first man to beat him was Jake LaMotta, and they fought six times. He had everything. He had charisma, skill, speed, power – he was the nearest thing to perfection in a fighter.

"In 1940, the Olympic Games were to be held in Tokyo. There's no doubt in most peoples' minds he would have been the Olympic champion. He would have been a lightweight back

Robinson-Turpin 2 set a middleweight attendance record of 61,370 spectators.

RALPH MORSE/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION

then. He was robbed of the Olympic gold medal by World War II."

When Robinson weighed in for his fight with Turpin in London, it caused a major stir in the area. "I was a boxing nut as a young kid," said Hart. "I used to read Boxing News, and so I knew all about Ray Robinson. When he came to London, I read every word about him. The day of the weigh-in in Soho, he brought the whole of the West End to a standstill. He arrived in that pink Cadillac. The nation listened to the radio commentary of the fight. I was 16 and I listened to it. The summaries were by a very famous ex-referee, and listening to them they gave the impression that Robinson was winning the fight easily. And yet, of course, Turpin's hand was raised in victory. If I remember right, the referee was Eugene Henderson, and the whole nation listening was astounded when they found out Turpin had won.

"We found out in the build-up to Turpin that he'd been on a European tour. He was a great playboy and ladies man, and you wonder how many encounters and adventures he had around Europe. He liked to enjoy himself. Turpin wasn't considered by him as a particular threat. He just didn't work out Turpin's style, from what I read. And of course there was a rematch in the contract, and 64 days later, he got his title back by stopping Turpin. Mind you, he was very badly cut that fight, and he knew if he didn't get Turpin out of there, he wouldn't continue.

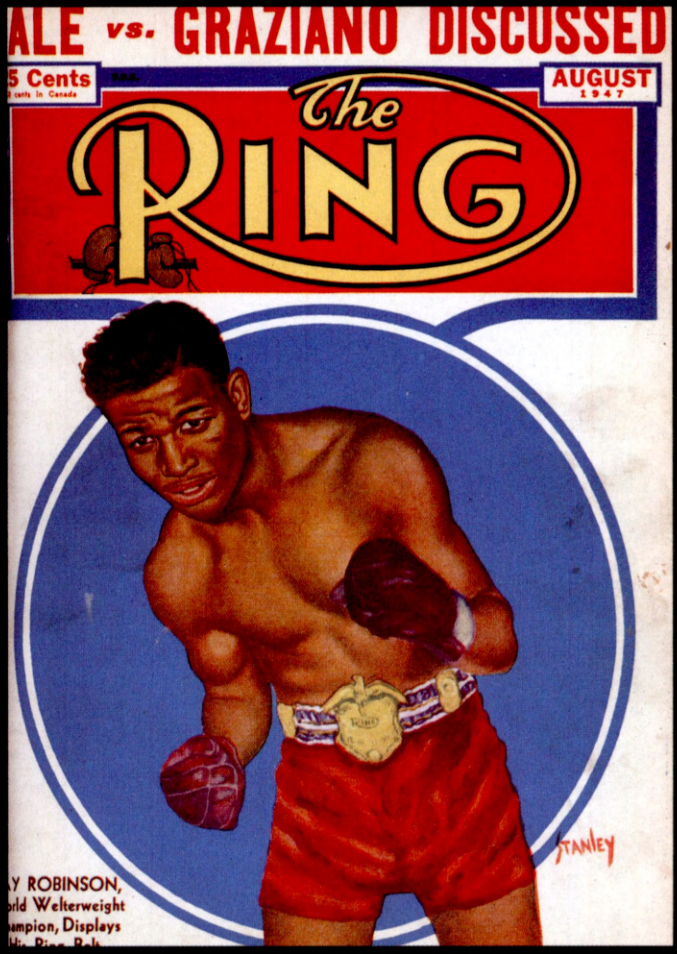
"I'm quite happy to have seen the great fighters that I saw," said Hart, who was at The Fight of the Century in 1971 and The Rumble In The Jungle in 1974, "but I would have loved to have watched Robinson on one of his great nights. One of his best quotes he ever gave was after he boxed Jimmy Doyle. Doyle died after they fought, and Robinson had to be at the inquest. The coroner said to Robinson, 'Did you intend to hurt Mr. Doyle?' And Robinson said, 'Sir, I am in the hurt business.'"

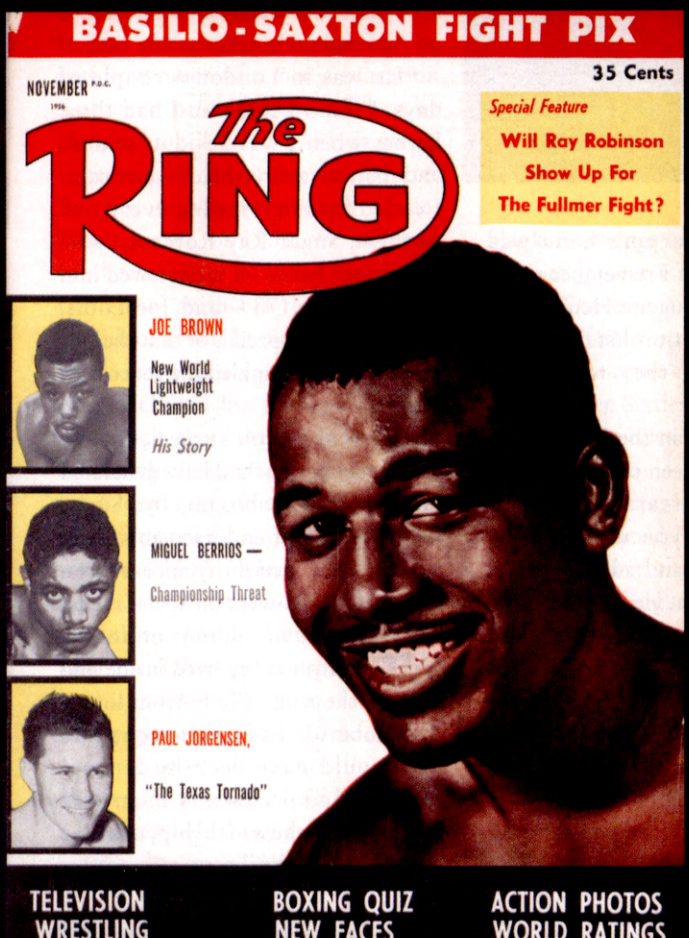
Back in the USA, in Harlem, Robinson was as big a star as anyone in sports today. "Robinson had that very famous restaurant in Harlem," Hart continued. "Every fight fan who ever went to New York used to visit. It was probably as famous as the Cotton Club in Harlem. He also had a TV show on which he used to dance on American television at one time.

"He was in London a couple of days. I think I told you I had three heroes when I was a kid at school, and they were three Black Americans. I ended up interviewing every one of them. Sugar Ray Robinson was one, Jesse Owens – I interviewed him in Munich in '73 – and Joe Louis. Robinson was special, of that there is no doubt. He sprinkled the sport with his greatness."

A greatness, you suspect, that in this modern era would have generated mega-nights in boxing for Sugar Ray, a legion of endorsements from leading brands, celebrity appearances, millions of followers on social media and hundreds of millions of dollars generated from a life lived inside and outside the ring. The bottom line is that Robinson had x-factor qualities and would have been in demand as a star and personality in any era through his showmanship, athletic skills and fistic brilliance.

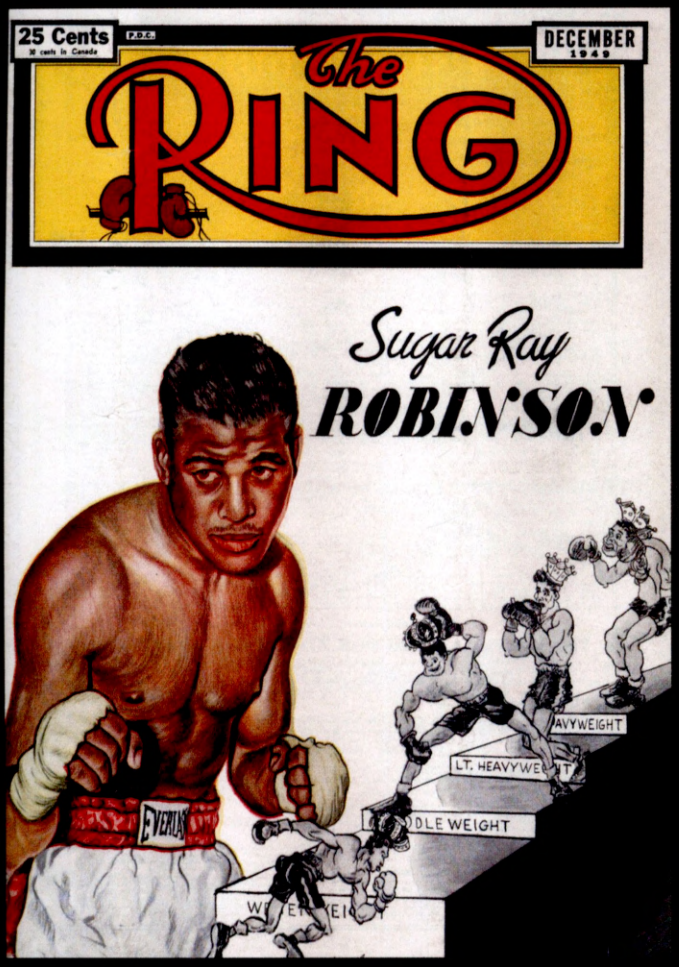
FROM THE ARCHIVES

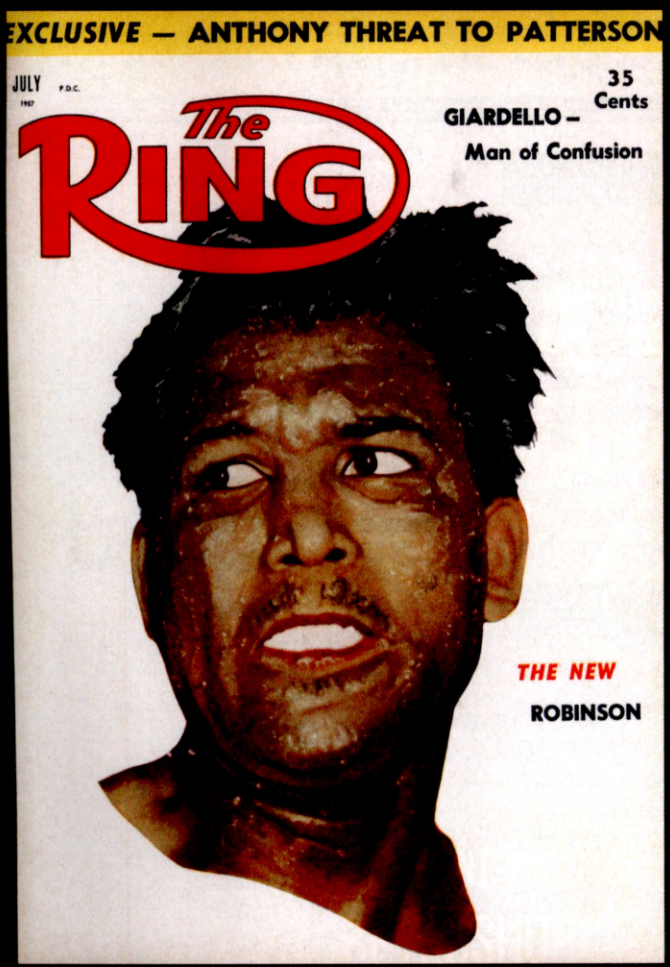


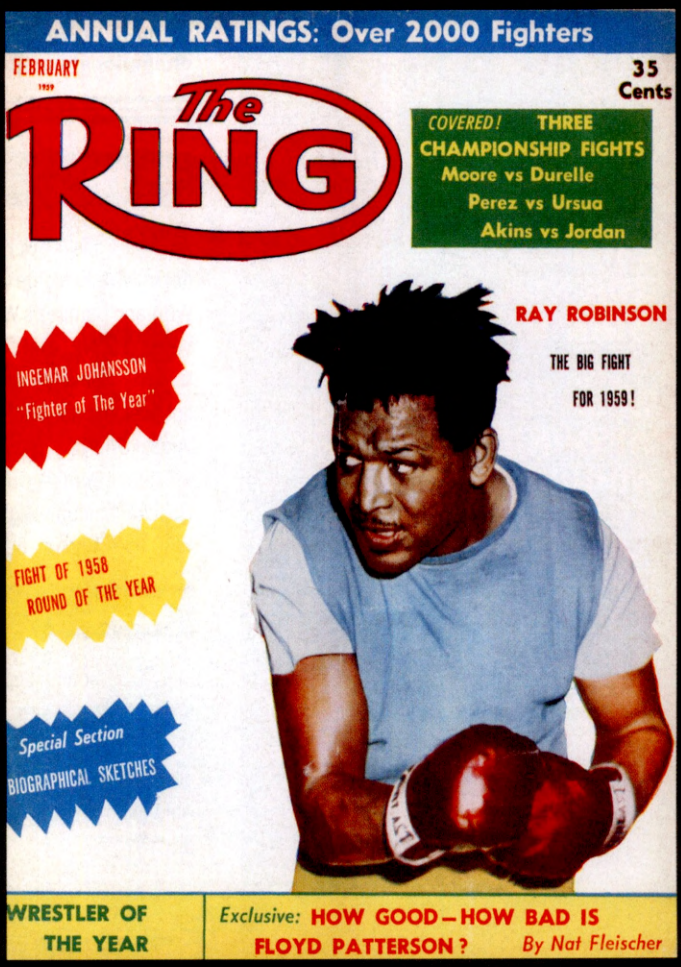


SUGAR COATED:

Robinson had a starring role on the cover of The Ring Magazine many times during his championship reign.







NOW AVAILABLE
NOW A

World
Best
Japanese
Made
Boxing
Equipment

811 N. CATALINA AVE.
3002 REDONDO BEACH
CA 90277 USA

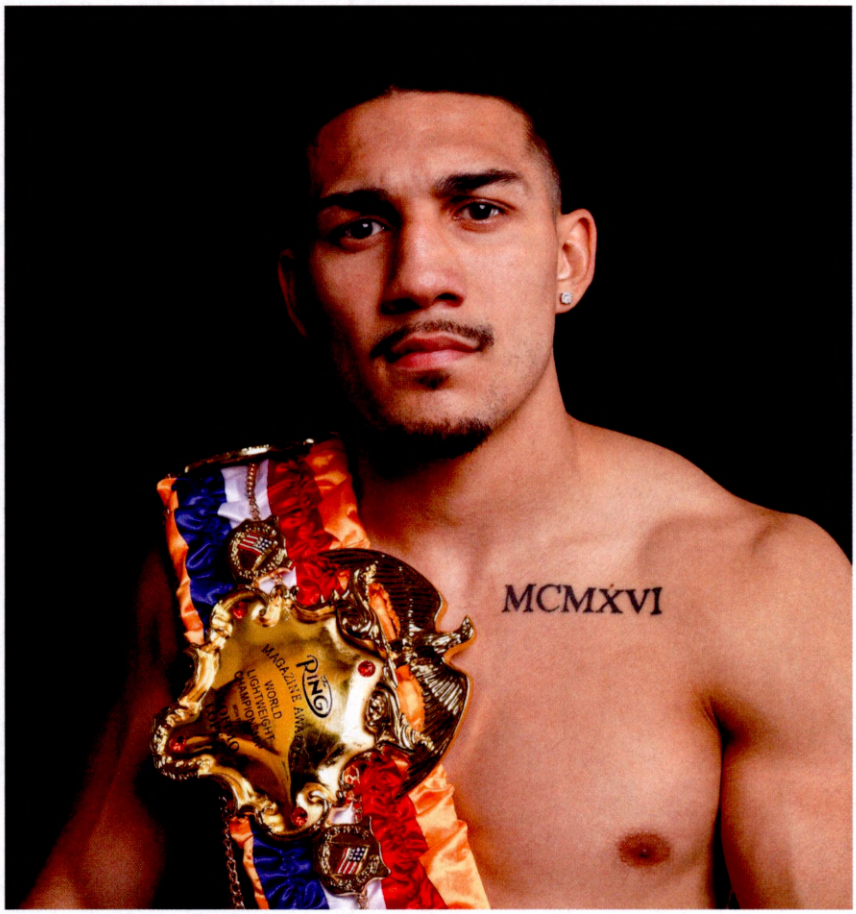
Phone:
310-376-9490
Fax:
310-540-6723
E-mail:
BOXING@
WINNING-USA.COM

Web:
WINNING-USA.COM
WINNING-JAPAN.COM

W.B.C.
certified

Winning
FIGHTING SPORTS WORLD

COMING UP



Teofimo Lopez will defend his lightweight titles, including the Ring Magazine championship, against George Kambosos Jr. on June 5.

MAY

MAY 22 – Josh Taylor vs. Jose Ramirez, junior welterweights (for Taylor's Ring/IBF/WBA and Ramirez's WBC/WBO titles), Las Vegas (ESPN).
MAY 29 – Devin Haney vs. Jorge Linares, lightweights (for Haney's WBC title), Las Vegas (DAZN).
MAY 29 – Nordine Oubaali vs. Nonito Donaire, bantamweights (for Oubaali's WBC title), Carson, California (Showtime).

JUNE

JUNE 5 – Teofimo Lopez vs. George Kambosos Jr., lightweights (for Lopez's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBO titles), Florida (Fite.tv).
JUNE 12 – Shakur Stevenson vs. Jeremiah Nakathila, junior lightweights, New York (ESPN).
JUNE 19 – Naoya Inoue vs. Michael Dasmarinas, bantamweights (for Inoue's Ring/IBF/WBA titles), Las Vegas (ESPN).
JUNE 19 – Jermall Charlo vs. Juan Macias Montiel, middleweights (for Charlo's WBC title), location TBA (Showtime).
JUNE 26 – Mario Barrios vs. Gervonta Davis, junior welterweights, Atlanta (Showtime PPV); Also, Erickson Lubin vs. Jeison Rosario, junior middleweights.

JULY

JULY 3 – Chris Colbert vs. Yuriorkis Gamboa, junior lightweights, location TBA (Showtime).
JULY 9 – Ryan Garcia vs. Javier Fortuna, lightweights, location TBA (DAZN).
JULY 17 – Jermell Charlo vs. Brian Castano, junior middleweights (for Charlo's Ring/IBF/WBA/ WBC and Castano's WBO titles), location TBA (Showtime)

Cleto Reyes USA
Boxing Equipment
TRAINING
makes champions
IF YOU NEED EQUIPMENT, YOU NEED CLETO REYES (833) REYES US / (833) 73937 87
WWW.CLETOREYESSHOP.COM | | WWW.CLETOREYESBOXING.COM

WWW.KOTICKETS.COM

KO TICKETS

Established 1999

LAS VEGAS OFFICE:
(800)283-8699

JIM BOONE CELL:
(702)591-1638

KO TICKETS

Proudly giving access to the best seats in Boxing and Entertainment. Since 1999.

@KOTickets

Richard T. Slone

Painting by SloneArt.com